George Berkeley: Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous

Edited by
Michael B. Mathias

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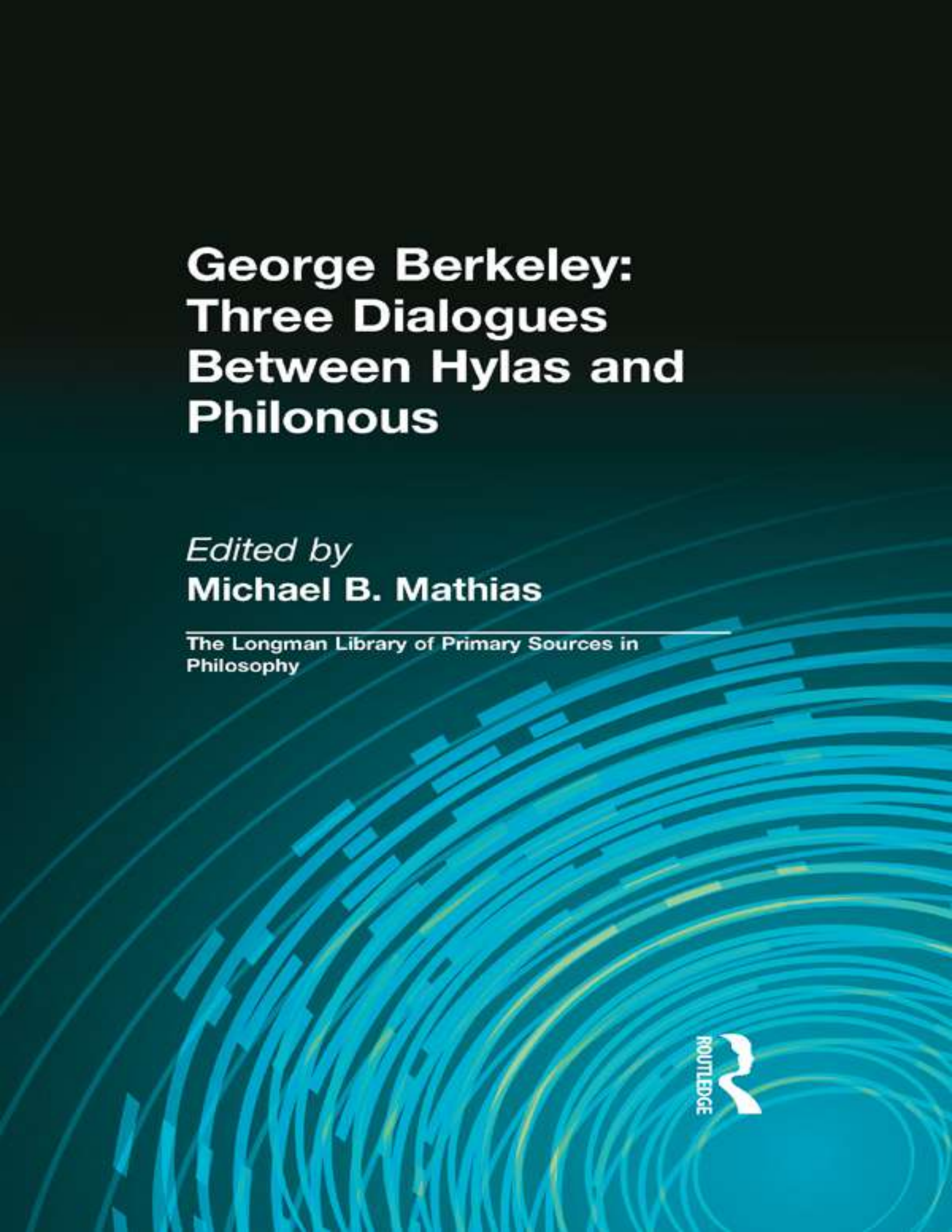

DANIEL KOLAK, SERIES EDITOR

George Berkeley

Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous

EDITED BY MICHAEL B. MATHIAS

UNION COLLEGE

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Contents

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

- Biography and Intellectual Influences
- The Program of the *Three Dialogues*
- A Synopsis of the *Three Dialogues*
- The Reception and Subsequent Influence of the *Three Dialogues*
- Bibliography
- A Note on the Text

THREE DIALOGUES BETWEEN HYLAS AND PHILONOUS

- Title Page
- Dedication
- Preface
- The First Dialogue
- The Second Dialogue
- The Third Dialogue

Editor's Introduction

Having surveyed the philosophical landscape at the dawn of the 18th century, George Berkeley (1685–1753) concluded that philosophers had become trapped in a maze of their own making. He believed that philosophers entered the maze by making a certain fundamental assumption—namely, that matter exists. The leading metaphysical systems of his day, including those of René Descartes (1596–1650) and John Locke (1632–1704), described the physical world as a realm of objects or bodies composed of minute, insensible corpuscles of matter that exist independently of the human mind and are endowed only with scientific properties such as extension, mass, and mobility. According to this general worldview, which Berkeley referred to as 'materialism', the physical world *as it really is* exists independent of, and is radically different than, the physical world *as it appears to our senses*. According to materialism, a physical object, such as a teacup, is constituted of corpuscles of matter, which themselves have no color, odor, taste, or temperature. But a teacup certainly appears to have color on its surface, and the tea inside of it certainly appears to have a color, odor, taste, and temperature. This, according to the materialist, is simply because the corpuscles of matter that make up the teacup and the tea have the ability to affect our senses in certain ways in virtue of their extension, mass, and motion.

Materialism had acquired the status of orthodoxy by the early 18th century. But Berkeley feared that materialism would encourage skepticism and atheism, and, in turn, immorality. He also believed that this "modern way of explaining things" gives rise to intractable—indeed, insolvable—problems in philosophy, science, mathematics, and theology. These

problems, Berkeley thought, form the walls of a maze with no exit, and his fundamental philosophical project involved showing philosophers the way out of the maze by showing them how they had gotten into it in the first place. The only hope for philosophy, Berkeley believed, was to avoid entering the maze in the first place—to deny that matter exists.

Materialism had already been subjected to vigorous criticism by skeptical philosophers who argued that neither our senses nor reason provide sufficient justification for believing that matter exists. These skeptics concluded that we simply cannot know the true nature of the physical world, and, hence, we can only make guarded claims about how the world appears to be. One of the major preoccupations of the materialists in the 17th century, then, was combating this skepticism. Descartes and Locke invested considerable intellectual effort in constructing philosophical arguments to show that we have the capacity to know the material world for what it truly is. Though Berkeley believed that the materialists failed to meet the skeptics' challenges, he was unwilling to resign himself to skepticism.

Berkeley realized that the materialists and skeptics shared a fundamental assumption—namely, that the real world is distinct from the world we immediately experience with our five senses. Because they shared this assumption, Berkeley saw the materialists and skeptics as being trapped in the same maze. But where the skeptics rightly recognized that the maze is inescapable, the materialists wrongly believed that there is a way out of the maze. Berkeley's fundamental philosophical insight was that one can refuse to enter the maze in the first place—that is, one can deny that matter exists and, by doing so, deny that the real world is distinct from the world we directly perceive. By exposing these assumptions as false and even unintelligible, Berkeley intended to undermine materialism and skepticism at once. He aimed to show that we *cannot even conceive* of a material world existing independent of its being perceived, and, hence, the problems that arise from materialism, including the problem of skepticism, are not genuine philosophical problems at all. Rather, the materialists and skeptics were both struggling with what some recent philosophers have called "pseudo-problems"—problems that cannot be solved because the very concepts involved in formulating them are nonsensical. When it is recognized that materialism rests upon incoherent assumptions, the walls of the maze that grow up around it simply dissolve.

Berkeley's analysis led him to develop a fantastic and revolutionary alternative to materialism. Central to his metaphysics is the claim that the whole of reality consists of the minds of spiritual beings and ideas in those minds. Berkeley referred to his view as 'immaterialism', by which he intended to convey that the fundamental constituents of reality are immaterial—that is, the minds of spiritual beings and the ideas in those minds are not composed of matter. Berkeley's view is also frequently referred to as 'idealism', which is intended to convey his view that ordinary physical objects exist only as collections of ideas in the minds of spiritual beings who perceive them. His view has often been summarized in the Latin slogan '*esse est percipi aut percipere*' ('to be is to be perceived or to perceive'). For a physical object, such as a teacup, to be is to be perceived, which means that the teacup exists only insofar as its constituent ideas are perceived. But if there are ideas that are perceived, there must also be minds that perceive them, and, for a mind, to be is to perceive.

Stated without context, Berkeley's worldview strikes many as absurd. It is perhaps all the more surprising to find that Berkeley styles himself as the defender of a "vulgar"—the term as Berkeley uses it means "ordinary" or "everyday" and does not have the pejorative connotation that it does today—conception of the world, and as an opponent to a convoluted, philosophical conception of the world. Where the philosophers believe that the real world *is distinct from* the world we immediately perceive, ordinary people believe that the real world *just is* the world that we directly or immediately perceive. Where the philosophers believe that the objects constituting the real world *are distinct from* the things that we sense, ordinary people believe that the very things that we see, hear, touch, taste, and smell *are* the objects of the real world. Where the philosophers *doubt* their senses, ordinary people *trust* their senses. On all of these counts Berkeley sided with ordinary people in opposition to the philosophers. (The fact that Berkeley takes 'philosophers' to be synonymous with 'materialists' indicates the pervasiveness of the view he was attacking.) In his Preface to the *Three Dialogues* Berkeley says that after having been shown the way out of the "wild mazes of philosophy" (54) one feels the same sense of satisfaction and peace that one feels after returning home from a long and difficult journey. The end of Berkeley's philosophical project then is not to provide us with some new knowledge about the world that we did not have before setting out on our inquiries. Rather, his goal is to vindicate what he

takes to be our ordinary, everyday conception of the world, and to show that we can know all that there is to know about the real world, once we come to recognize that there is nothing more to the real world than what we directly experience with our five senses.

More so today than ever, we look to science for an account of the fundamental nature of the physical world. Scientific materialism is at least tacitly adopted by most people, and we have become accustomed to believing that the "real world" as described by scientists is in many respects very different from the world of everyday experience. Today we do not conceive the physical world in terms of corpuscles of matter, of course, but in terms of quarks, leptons, strings, and fields. Berkeley remains important and relevant today because he, perhaps more than any other modern philosopher, insists that we must be able to reconcile our scientific conception of the world with our everyday experience if that conception is to be intelligible to us.

The *Three Dialogues* is a concise and engaging introduction to Berkeley's philosophy and to philosophy in general. It is also a literary gem. The work records three imaginary conversations that occur in the garden of an unnamed college on three successive days. The characters are Hylas—a materialist whose name derives from the Greek for "matter"—and Philonous—an idealist whose name derives from the Greek for "lover of mind" and who serves as Berkeley's mouthpiece. Through the course of the *Three Dialogues* Philonous offers a sustained attack on Hylas' materialism and an exposition and defense of immaterialism.

BIOGRAPHY AND INTELLECTUAL INFLUENCES

George Berkeley was born to an Anglo-Irish family in or near Kilkenny, Ireland on March 12, 1685. He entered Kilkenny College in 1696 and Trinity College, Dublin in 1700, where he was graduated with a B.A. degree in 1704 and an M.A. degree in 1707. Berkeley was elected fellow of Trinity College in 1707, and, though often absent, he would remain associated with the college until 1724 when he resigned to become Dean of Derry. He was ordained as an Anglican priest—a common practice for British academics at the time—in 1710. He traveled to London in 1713

where he befriended leading intellectual figures such as Jonathan Swift, Richard Steele, and Joseph Addison. Alexander Pope would credit Berkeley with "ev'ry virtue under heav'n." He toured the continent twice (1713–14 and 1716–20). At the end of the second continental tour Berkeley published *De Motu* (1721), a Latin tract on motion, which was written as a submission for an essay contest sponsored by the Royal Academy of Sciences at Paris.

Berkeley was not merely an academic, as a considerable portion of his life was devoted to philanthropy. In 1722 he resolved to establish a college in Bermuda for the sons of colonists and Native Americans, and this project would dominate his life for a decade. He secured a royal charter for the college, raised substantial funds from private subscriptions, and was promised a monetary grant from the British Parliament. In 1728 Berkeley married Anne Forster, and soon after the wedding they sailed to America. They settled near Newport, Rhode Island, where Berkeley built a house—Whitehall, which still stands today—and waited for the promised grant to materialize. During this time Berkeley was in contact with some of the most important American intellectuals of the day. He also wrote the bulk of *Alciphron* (1732), a work composed of seven dialogues defending Christianity against freethinking and deism, while in America. In early 1731 Berkeley was informed that the promised Parliamentary grant would not be paid, and he and his family returned to London later that year. Before leaving America, Berkeley donated a considerable portion of his own personal library, and much of the money that he had raised for his college, to a nascent Yale College. Though Berkeley ultimately failed to establish his college in Bermuda, his considerable effort increased his reputation and is considered partially responsible for his appointment as Bishop of Cloyne in 1734. He acquired his moniker— "the good Bishop"—through his generous educational and charitable activities on behalf of Irish Protestants and Catholics alike. In 1752 Berkeley left Cloyne for Oxford to oversee the education of his son, George. He died on January 14, 1753 and is interred in the chapel of Christ Church College, Oxford.

The three works for which Berkeley is most well known, and which secure his position as one of the major figures in the history of early-modern philosophy, were written and published when he was a very young man. He was only 24 when *An Essay towards a New Theory of Vision* (1709) was published. In it Berkeley examined issues related to visual perception and the relationship between sight and touch. Though this work

went some way toward preparing the ground for his immaterialism—it concluded that "the proper objects of sight neither exist without the mind, nor are the images of external things"—it stopped short of claiming that there is no such thing as matter in the external world. Berkeley first advanced and defended his immaterialism in a systematic fashion in *A Treatise concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* (1710). The introduction to this work contains a famous and unyielding attack on abstract general ideas such as 'pure extension' and 'absolute space', which Berkeley saw as central to the materialists' description of the physical world. In the body of the work Berkeley argued that matter does not exist; that ordinary physical objects are simply collections of ideas; and that God produces these ideas in our minds. Significant portions of the work are devoted to anticipating and answering possible objections to immaterialism and to explaining how immaterialism allows us to resolve a variety of metaphysical, epistemological, scientific, mathematical, and theological puzzles.

Few people read Berkeley's *Principles*, and those who did tended not to understand it. The most common misunderstanding of the work still plagues Berkeley's philosophy today. Despite his best efforts, readers then and now tend to believe that in denying the existence of *matter* Berkeley must also be denying the existence of *physical objects*. So, Berkeley's immaterialism was thought to be a form of skepticism. One fundamental motivation for writing his third major work, the *Three Dialogues* (1713), was to attempt to correct this misunderstanding. Berkeley tells us in the Preface to this work that after the poor reception of the *Principles* he found it "requisite to treat more clearly and fully of certain principles laid down in the First [Part of the *Principles of Human Knowledge*] and to place them in a new light, which is the business of the following *Dialogues*." The *Dialogues*, then, had the same fundamental design as the *Principles*—it set out to show that mind-independent matter does not exist and that the resulting immaterialism does not lead to skepticism about physical objects. But where the *Principles* was written primarily for other scholars, the *Dialogues* was intended to be a popular introduction to immaterialism. Berkeley 'places immaterialism in a new light' by employing a dialogue form reminiscent of Plato (c. 428–347 B.C.E.). In the *Dialogues* Berkeley's characters adopt an easy conversational style. Philonous, who seems to be the senior of the two characters, guides Hylas through the conversations, carefully explaining

philosophical concepts whose meanings were taken for granted in the *Principles*. Hylas freely asks questions when a concept or position is unclear to him, and Philonous provides helpful examples that illustrate and clarify these concepts and positions. Despite their pedagogical design, the conversations seem very natural.

There are no significant differences in doctrine between the *Principles* and the *Dialogues*. The intention of the latter work was simply to provide a clearer exposition of the views already presented in the *Principles* in order to make those views accessible to a larger audience and to correct common misunderstandings of immaterialism. There is certainly a noticeable difference in emphasis between the two works, though. Because the *Dialogues* had a more populist aim, Berkeley repeatedly stresses in this work the affinity that he sees between his views and those of ordinary people. Absent from the *Dialogues* is any extended attack on abstract ideas corresponding to that in the Introduction of the *Principles*. There is, however, a considerable expansion of his critique of the primary-secondary quality distinction. Berkeley also expands and recasts his views on the subjects of mind and God, and he attempts to make clear the differences between his views and those of other thinkers.

The pioneering Berkeley scholar A.A. Luce conjectured that "copies of Locke's *Essay* and of Taylor's translation of Malebranche's *Rechere* must have been on [Berkeley's] study table, with a volume or two of Bayle's *Dictionary*" as he composed his earliest philosophical thoughts.[1] It is now generally accepted that Berkeley's philosophical agenda and thinking were shaped primarily by John Locke, Nicolas Malebranche (1638–1715), and Pierre Bayle (1647–1706). In his monumental *Essay concerning Human Understanding* (1690), Locke developed and defended the empiricist position that all of our knowledge derives from the ideas we come to have through experience. The *Essay* also provided a classic exposition of the scientific materialism that Berkeley set out to refute. While he was deeply committed to Locke's empiricism, Berkeley completely rejected Locke's view that the real world is composed of material bodies that exist independent of their being perceived. Indeed, Berkeley believed that this understanding of the real world is wholly inconsistent with empiricism. A consistent empiricist, Berkeley believed, is led to immaterialism.

In the Introduction to his *Essay* Locke wrote:

> …it may be of use to prevail with the busy mind of man to be more cautious in meddling with things exceeding its comprehension; to stop when it is at the utmost extent of its tether; and to sit down in a quiet ignorance of those things which, upon examination, are found to be beyond the reach of our capacities. (Intro. §4)[2]

Locke intended this to be a corrective to the to metaphysical pretensions of rationalists such as Descartes, Benedict de Spinoza (1632–1677), and G.W. Leibniz (1646–1716), whose far-reaching philosophical systems were built on the assumption that human reason is capable of providing us with knowledge of things extending well beyond our experience. Berkeley, like Locke, was sharply critical of speculative metaphysics, but he discerned in Locke a tendency to engage in the very sort of speculation that he himself criticized. At the opening of the *Principles*, in language that clearly echoes Locke, Berkeley insinuated that Locke's own materialist assumptions require that we "sit down in a forlorn skepticism" (Intro. §1). This is because Locke's material world is—to use Locke's own words—"beyond the reach of our capacities" and, hence, 'exceeds our comprehension.' Locke's metaphysical principles, Berkeley believed, lead us directly to skepticism.

Berkeley read Nicolas Malebranche's *De la recherché de la vérité* (*The Search after Truth*, 3 vol., 1674–75) as a young student, and he apparently met Malebranche on his first tour of the continent.[3] (According to Berkeley's early biographer Joseph Stock, the meeting between Berkeley and Malebranche was so heated that it led to Malebranche's death. The story is clearly apocryphal, though, since Malebranche died two years after Berkeley's visit.) Malebranche was the most important Cartesian philosopher of the second-half of the 17th century, though he rejected a number of theses that Descartes himself defended. In his *Meditations on First Philosophy* (1641), Descartes argued that material bodies exist; that these material bodies cause many of our ideas; and that we can be sure that these ideas accurately represent the material world, since God "guarantees" the veracity of our sense experience. Malebranche believed that these claims are inconsistent with other, more fundamental, aspects of Descartes' philosophy. He argued that neither sense nor reason could conclusively establish that material bodies exist—though he also maintained that we have a natural propensity to believe that matter exists and that faith in the Scriptures requires this belief. He also argued that matter is causally inert, and, hence, Malebranche denied that material objects can cause any of our

ideas. He is perhaps the best known proponent of *occasionalism*—the doctrine that physical events are really only "occasions" upon which God, the one true cause of all things, produces effects—though the view had been developed by Arab philosophers in the middle ages and was defended by many of Malebranche's contemporaries. So, Malebranche maintained that we do not *really* perceive material things at all, though faith leads us to believe that such things really do exist. Our perceptions, he argues, really involve God's uniting our souls to His, thereby causing us to perceive His ideas of things. Male-branche quite literally believed that "we see all things in God."

Much to his consternation, many readers of the *Principles* took Berkeley to be Malebranche's disciple. And though Berkeley would insist in the *Dialogues* that "upon the whole, there are no principles more fundamentally opposite than [Malebranche's] and mine" (99), there are certain parallels evident in their views that made such a misinterpretation possible. Like the French philosopher, Berkeley adhered to a broadly Cartesian view of the mind. More importantly, Malebranche's skeptical doubts about providing a rational justification for belief in the existence of matter paved the way for Berkeley's dismissing matter altogether. In addition, Berkeley agreed with Malebranche that only a spirit or mind can be causally efficacious, though he would allow that *finite* minds are also active causes. Berkeley and Malebranche also agreed that God is the direct cause of our ideas of sensible things, but Berkeley did not believe that this involves God's uniting our souls with His. Berkeley justly insists that the similarities between his and Malebranche's thought are superficial. Though Berkeley often tends to express his views using language similar to that of Malebranche, these similarities of phrasing mask significant doctrinal differences.

Pierre Bayle was the most important skeptical philosopher between Michel de Montaigne (1533–92) and David Hume (1711–76). In his *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (*Historical and Critical Dictionary*, 1697), Bayle concluded that philosophical reasoning inevitably leads to universal skepticism, but that nature compels us to accept certain beliefs on faith. Berkeley regarded Bayle's skeptical conclusion as wholly unacceptable, and when he tells us in the subtitle to the *Dialogues* that the work is written "in opposition to skeptics and atheists" we should understand that Bayle is included in this number. But Bayle's influence on

Berkeley was not solely negative. Berkeley found useful many of the arguments that Bayle had employed to reach his skeptical conclusions. For example, in his articles on Pyrrho of Elis and Zeno the Eleatic, Bayle advanced some of the very arguments against material bodies and the primary-secondary quality distinction that Berkeley would later employ in the *Principles* and *Dialogues*.[4] Because Berkeley made use of many of the same arguments that Bayle had utilized to reach his skeptical conclusions, many of Berkeley's contemporaries mistakenly thought that he too was an advocate of skepticism.

Though Berkeley would draw heavily from Locke, Malebranche, and Bayle, he believed that they were each trapped in different corridors of the same philosophical maze. Locke had become trapped in the maze by wholeheartedly defending the early-modern dogma of matter. What is more, Berkeley believed that Locke altogether failed to recognize that he was trapped in this maze, because he failed to properly employ his empiricist principles to critique this dogma. Malebranche and Bayle had at least recognized that no rational justification of materialism is possible—that it is beyond our capacity to find our way out of this maze once we enter it. Nonetheless, they had in their own ways resigned themselves to being trapped in the maze. Malebranche believed that it was necessary to retain belief in matter for theological reasons, and his Occasionalism was designed to reconcile his skepticism about matter with this belief. Bayle believed that nature compels us to believe that matter exists, despite the fact that we cannot rationally justify this belief. Berkeley believed that all three had failed to see that one need not—indeed, *should* not—enter the maze in the first place—one can and should deny the existence of matter altogether and thereby avoid skepticism and a multitude of other problems.

THE PROGRAM OF THE *THREE DIALOGUES*

There are both critical and constructive aspects to Berkeley's program in the *Three Dialogues.* The critical aspect involves his refutation of materialism. Berkeley intends to show that the concept 'matter' is either self-contradictory or utterly meaningless, depending upon the proposed definition, and that the fundamental assumption that the physical world

exists independent of its being perceived is incoherent. The constructive aspects of his project involve his exposition and defense of immaterial-ism, and it is these aspects of his program that Berkeley emphasizes in the lengthy subtitle of the *Dialogues*. It is a book:

> The design of which is plainly to demonstrate the reality and perfection of human knowledge, the incorporeal nature of the soul, and the immediate providence of a deity: In opposition to skeptics and atheists. Also, to open a method for rendering the sciences more easy, useful, and compendious. (51)

Once we realize that there is no more to the physical world than what we immediately perceive with our five senses, we see that we can have knowledge of the existence and nature of real things. Moreover, immaterialism provides the foundation for two central tenets of traditional Christian theology—God's existence and the immortality of the soul. Immaterialism, then, provides us with the resources to refute both skepticism and atheism, according to Berkeley. To appreciate both the critical and constructive aspects of Berkeley's program we need to consider the main tenets of materialism and also why Berkeley believes that this view invariably leads to skepticism and atheism. We also need to consider the main tenets of Berkeley's own immaterialism and why he believes that his view provides us with the resources needed to refute skepticism and atheism. Finally, we must consider what implications immaterialism has for our understanding of empirical science.

Materialism and the Scientific Worldview

Today philosophers use the term 'materialism' to refer to a general metaphysical view which holds that all entities and phenomena are composed of, or are reducible to, matter or material forces. Because materialists deny the independent existence of spiritual beings and forces and maintain that everything that exists is made up of one fundamental type of "stuff"—matter—materialism so understood represents a form of monism. Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), an important precursor to Berkeley in the British empiricist tradition, is typically regarded as a proponent of materialism in this sense. But while he surely opposes *material monism*, Berkeley also regards *dualists*, such as Descartes and Locke—who maintain that both material *and* spiritual substances exist independently of one another—as materialists. On Berkeley's view anyone who allows that

matter exists independent of mind is a materialist in the relevant sense. So Hylas, the proponent of materialism in the *Dialogues*, represents a variety of different philosophers, who despite the significant differences between them share in common the view that matter exists independent of mind. (Note that Berkeley's immaterialism represents a form of *mental monism* in that it holds that all entities and phenomena are composed of, or are reducible to, immaterial spirits or minds, or ideas in those minds.) I will follow Berkeley here and use the term 'materialism' to refer to any view that allows that matter exists independent of mind. As noted earlier, John Locke's *Essay concerning Human Understanding* provides the classic exposition of the materialism that Berkeley is attacking, and in the following discussion I will rely primarily on his account, noting important differences between his view and that of others when relevant.

Materialists like Locke are *realists* about matter and material objects, since they maintain that matter and objects composed of matter really exist independent of our minds and of our perceiving them. As Hylas insists in the First Dialogue, material objects have "a real absolute being, distinct from and without any relation to their being perceived" (61). Berkeley attributes to the materialist the view that material objects and their properties exist "without the mind" (61). This phrase is not intended simply to convey that material objects are spatially located outside of the mind, though they are according to the materialist, but that their existence in no way depends upon their being perceived by someone. To say that material objects exist "without the mind" is to say that there is no necessary connection between a material object's existing and its being perceived. Hylas expresses this point by saying, "To *exist* is one thing, and to be *perceived* is another" (61). According to the materialist, whether or not a material object such as a cherry—to use one of Berkeley's own examples—exists is entirely independent of whether or not anyone perceives it. To paraphrase Hylas, 'for a cherry to exist is one thing, and for the cherry to be perceived is another.'

Having said that the relationship between material objects and minds is wholly contingent, what exactly is involved on those occasions when we do perceive material objects? According to materialists like Locke, to perceive a material object is to perceive an idea or mental image that is produced by a causal process originating in the object and which represents the object by way of resembling it. Several points here require explanation. First, the

materialists, like nearly all early-modern philosophers, including Berkeley himself, believed that the *direct* or *immediate* objects of perception are ideas or mental images in our minds. Locke expressed the view succinctly in the *Essay*: "the mind," he wrote, "perceives nothing but its own ideas" (4.4.3). Since Berkeley agrees that this is true, Hylas and Philonous *share* the premise that "whatever is immediately perceived is an idea" (87). Materialists like Locke and Hylas, though, go on to claim that many of the ideas in our mind are caused by material objects existing in the external world and that these ideas represent those objects by way of resembling them. This is characteristic of a *causal-representative theory of perception*. Materialism, then, involves a form of *indirect* or *representative realism*—material objects *really exist* independent of their being perceived, and those times when we do perceive these objects we do so only *indirectly* through our ideas of them. According to the materialists that Berkeley is attacking, an idea is a mental representation of a material object, and we directly or immediately perceive only the ideas in our mind, not material objects themselves. As Locke put it, "It is evident the mind does not know things [*i.e.*, material objects in the external world] immediately, but only by intervention of the ideas it has of them" (4.4.3). Our experience of material objects existing in the external world is always mediated by our awareness of ideas existing in our mind.

The materialist's account of perception can be illustrated with an example. Consider an observer's perception of the cherry mentioned a moment ago. The observer perceives a cherry just in case she perceives a cherry-idea that is produced by a causal process originating in a cherry and that represents the cherry by way of resembling the cherry. On the materialist's account, something roughly like the follow is happening in an ordinary case of perception. Light reflects off of the surface of a cherry—a material object in the external world—and heads for the observer's eyes. The eyes are connected to the brain by optical nerves such that when the nerves are properly stimulated a visual image of a cherry arises in the observer.[5] The observer, directly aware of the cherry-idea, infers that there is a material object in the external world—a cherry—which the cherry-idea resembles in important respects. Again, in perceiving the cherry our observer directly or immediately perceives a cherry-idea that is caused by and resembles the cherry, which exists in the external world.

On this view our perceptions of material objects are the products of causal processes originating in material objects. According to Locke, material objects cause ideas by virtue of their 'qualities'. He writes:

> Whatever the mind perceives *in itself*, or is the immediate object of perception, thought, or understanding, that I call *idea*; and the power to produce any idea in our mind, I call a *quality* of the subject in which that power is. Thus a snowball having the power to produce in us the ideas of white, cold, and round,—the power to produce those ideas in us, as they are in the snowball, I call qualities; and as they are sensations or perceptions in our understandings, I call them ideas…. (2.8.8)

Here Locke reiterates that ideas alone are the direct objects of perception and, more generally, thought. These ideas are mind-dependent entities: they literally exist "in us"—that is, in our minds. Qualities, on the other hand, are the powers of material objects that cause ideas to arise in us under normal observation conditions.

Locke, like almost all early-modern philosophers and scientists, distinguished between two kinds of qualities of material things—'primary' and 'secondary' qualities. This distinction can be traced back to the Greek atomist Democritus (460-370 B.C.E.) and is still defended in some form by many philosophers today. Hylas avails himself of this distinction midway through the First Dialogue. Primary qualities include solidity, extension (size), figure (shape), bulk (mass), and mobility. Locke asks us to consider a case where a grain of wheat is divided in half, the two halves are then divided in half again, and so on. No matter how long this process of division continues, the remaining parts will always be solid, have some size, some shape, some mass, and mobility. Locke takes this example to illustrate the fact that primary qualities are "utterly inseparable from the body in what state soever it be" and "inseparable from every particle of matter" (2.8.9). This is to say that these qualities are *essential* to matter—any portion of matter whatsoever necessarily possesses these qualities. Moreover, these qualities exist in material objects independent of their being perceived by any mind. Primary qualities are "really in [material bodies] whether any one's senses perceive them or no," writes Locke (2.8.17). The solidity, size, shape, mass, and mobility of the grain of wheat exist, according to Locke, even when no mind perceives these qualities.

Secondary qualities include colors, sounds, tastes, odors, and temperature (heat and cold). These qualities, Locke maintains, "are nothing in the objects themselves but powers to produce various sensations in us by their

primary qualities, i.e. by the bulk, figure, texture, and motion of their insensible parts" (2.8.10). Secondary qualities are the powers—or 'dispositions' in contemporary philosophical parlance—of material objects to cause ideas or sensations of colors, sounds, tastes, smells, and temperature in the mind of a normal perceiver under normal observation conditions. Material objects have these powers by virtue of their primary qualities. Locke's snowball, for example, possesses the power, by virtue of its primary qualities—or, better, by virtue of the primary qualities of its atomic parts—to produce in a normal human perceiver the idea or sensation of whiteness. Secondary qualities, then, involve a causal relation between primary qualities that are literally *in* an object and the mind of a perceiver and are, therefore, mind-dependent in a way that primary qualities are not. Locke is ambivalent about whether the mere *possession* of these powers warrants ascriptions of secondary qualities to the objects possessing them, or whether we should ascribe these qualities to objects only when those powers *actually manifest* themselves. Suppose Locke's snowball is placed in a freezer where no one can see it. One might say that the snowball is still white in the sense that it still has the power or disposition to cause a white sensation in a perceiver even though there is no perceiver present, or one might say that the snowball simply ceases to be white since there is no one to whom the snowball looks white. There are passages in Locke's work that suggest both views. Either way, Locke clearly takes secondary qualities to be mind-dependent in a way that primary qualities are not. Despite appearances, Locke maintains that whiteness is not *in* the snowball in the same literal way that, say, its mass is.

Having developed the distinction between primary and secondary qualities, let's return to the relationship between the qualities of a material object and our ideas of these qualities. Because primary qualities are "really in" material bodies, Locke believes that "ideas of primary qualities of bodies are resemblances of them and their patterns really do exist in the bodies themselves" (2.8.15). That is, our ideas of an object's primary qualities actually resemble those qualities as they are in the object itself. If we think of the ideas in our mind as being analogous to pictures, Locke is saying that our ideas of primary qualities are *good* pictures—that is, they are fairly accurate representations of primary qualities themselves. For example, my idea of the snowball's round shape accurately represents something that really exists in the external world—the snowball's

roundness. In contrast, because secondary qualities are not really in objects, "the ideas produced in us by these secondary qualities have no resemblance of them [*i.e.*, material bodies] at all" (2.8.15). Our ideas of secondary qualities do not resemble anything in a material object, since there is really nothing corresponding to these qualities in the object for these ideas to resemble. Since whiteness is not really in the snowball, my idea of whiteness does not resemble anything in the snowball itself. The implication of all of this is that Locke takes the gap between appearance and reality to be much smaller in the case of the more objective primary qualities than in the case of the more subjective secondary qualities.

The primary-secondary quality distinction was central to the early-modern scientific worldview. Materialism, the metaphysical foundation for this scientific worldview, maintained that matter is the ultimate constituent of the physical world and that primary qualities are the qualities essential to matter. Therefore, primary qualities are the proper objects of scientific investigation and the ultimate nature of physical reality is to be described in terms of them. Consider the view of Locke's contemporary, the English scientist Robert Boyle (1627–1691). Boyle was an atomist—he believed that the physical world is composed of indivisible 'corpuscles' or particles of matter that are in constant motion and that act upon one another through direct contact. In his *Origin of Forms and Qualities* (1666) Boyle defended a mechanical account of nature by which physical phenomena were to be explained by considering 'only the size, shape, motion (or want of it), texture, and the resulting qualities and attributes of the small particles of matter.' When scientists like Boyle described matter itself, they did not refer to secondary qualities at all. Boyle did not ascribe qualities such as color, taste, or odor to atoms themselves. Rather, he maintained that these "resulting qualities" are to be explained *by* the atomic structure of matter. Material objects, on his view, have the power to cause sensations of colors, tastes, and odors in us by virtue of the primary qualities of their atomic parts. Locke was an atomist like Boyle, but materialists who were not atomists also accepted the primary-secondary quality distinction. Descartes, for example, was not an atomist—he believed that extension can be infinitely divided and, hence, he denied the existence of indivisible particles of matter—but he endorsed the primary-secondary quality distinction for basically the same reason as Boyle and Locke. According to Descartes, a

scientific description of matter refers only to extension and its modes and not to color, taste, odor, and other secondary qualities.

The materialists that Berkeley was targeting were also proponents of the *substance theory*—they maintained that a physical object is composed not only of its various qualities but *also* an underlying substance to which these qualities belong. A cherry, on this view, is composed of qualities such as redness, tartness, and roundness *and* a 'substratum' in which all of these qualities are said to inhere. Substance is said to "support" or "bear" the qualities of an object. Empiricists like Locke and rationalists like Descartes provided different sorts of arguments on behalf of this view, though they shared the basic belief that qualities must be "had" by something—that is, a quality is always a quality *of something*. If, for example, there is roundness, there must be something that is round.

Locke argues that experience leads us to suppose that qualities inhere in individual substances, since we experience qualities in combination with one another. For example, we notice that the qualities of redness, tartness, and roundness are regularly observed together, and this leads us to infer that they are united in one subject—a cherry. Because we 'cannot imagine how these simple *ideas* can subsist by themselves, we accustom ourselves to suppose some *substratum* in which they do subsist and from which they do result, which therefore we call *substance*.' (2.23.1)[6] Since we cannot conceive how qualities or properties such as redness, tartness, and roundness could "freely float about" in the world, we suppose that they must exist *in* something, namely, an individual substance. So on Locke's view, individual substances serve to anchor qualities and hold them together as the qualities of one thing.[7]

Though experience leads us to suppose that qualities must inhere in individual substances, Locke acknowledges that we do not—indeed, we *cannot*—have any *positive idea* of substance in general, but only a *relative notion* of it. He writes:

> …if anyone will examine himself concerning his notion of pure substance in general, he will find he has no other idea of it at all, but only a supposition of he knows not what *support* of such qualities which are capable of producing simple ideas in us….The idea then we have, to which we give the *general* name substance, being nothing but the supposed, but unknown, support of those qualities we find existing, which we imagine cannot subsist *sine re substante*, without something to support them, we call that support *substantia*; which, according to the true import of the word, is, in plain English, standing under or upholding. (2.23.2)

Locke believes that all of our positive ideas of material objects are ideas of qualities, for, as he repeats here, it is the qualities of objects that produce ideas in us. Since substance itself has no qualities, but rather is that which "stands under" or "supports" qualities, material substance is unperceivable in principle. Our idea of substance, therefore, is the idea of an unknowable 'supposition we know not what support of such qualities.' Since Locke, like the other materialists that Berkeley is criticizing, maintains that we can perceive only a material object's qualities and not the substance that supports these qualities, Hylas and Philonous both agree early in the First Dialogue to accept the claim that "if you take away all [of a physical object's] sensible qualities, there remains nothing sensible" (61).

Where Locke argues that *experience* leads us to posit the existence of material substance, Descartes believes that *reason* leads us to conclude that physical objects are composed of both qualities and an underlying substance. Employing a line of argument that traces back at least to Aristotle (384–322 B.C.E.), Descartes contends that physical objects must be substances distinct from their properties in order for objects to persist through changes of their properties. In his Second Meditation Descartes asks us to consider a piece of bee's wax fresh from the hive. The wax is honey-colored, has a lumpish shape and a fragrant smell. But when the wax is placed beside a fire, its properties change—as it melts the wax becomes softer, more transparent, flatter, and loses its fragrance. Despite this change of properties, we judge it to be the same piece of wax. What, Descartes asks, legitimates this judgment? He argues that it must be the fact that although the qualities of the wax have changed, its underlying substance has not—one and the same substance persists through the change.

Today we tend to take it for granted that science reveals the true nature of the physical world and that the world described by scientists is very different from the world of our everyday experience. From our perspective it is perhaps difficult at first to recognize how revolutionary the early-modern scientific worldview truly was. Upon reflection, though, we can imagine how jarring and contrary to common-sense scientific materialism would have seemed to most ordinary people in the early-18th century. Berkeley purports to defend the sensibilities of these ordinary people who find it inconceivable that the physical world in all its splendor is ultimately composed only of colorless, odorless, tasteless atoms moving in a void, or Cartesian pure extension.

Materialism, Skepticism, and Atheism

Berkeley regarded scientific materialism as not only philosophically indefensible but also as dangerous. He believed that materialism *invariably* leads us to skepticism and atheism, and skepticism and atheism, in turn, undermine the "practice of virtue." Given his deep and abiding concern that we should avoid these consequences, he was strongly motivated to refute materialism. Berkeley tells us in the work's subtitle that the *Three Dialogues* was written "In opposition to sceptics and atheists," and in the work's Preface he tells us that it is his intention "to convince *sceptics* and *infidels* by reason." This section considers in turn the relationship Berkeley conceived between materialism and skepticism, on the one hand, and the relationship he conceived between materialism and atheism, on the other.

Regarding the relationship between materialism and skepticism, Berkeley writes in the Preface to the *Dialogues*:

> Upon the common principles of philosophers, we are not assured of the existence of things from their being perceived. And we are taught to distinguish their real nature from that which falls under our senses. Hence arise skepticism and paradoxes. It is not enough that we see and feel, that we taste and smell a thing. Its true nature, its absolute external entity, is still concealed. For, though it is the fiction of our own brain, we have made it inaccessible to all our faculties. Sense is fallacious, reason defective. We spend our lives in doubting of those things which other men evidently know, and believing those things which they laugh at and despise. (53)

By "the common principles of the philosophers," Berkeley means here the principles of scientific materialism that we considered in the preceding section. As we have seen, scientific materialism purports to describe the physical world as it really is in terms of these principles, and the "real world" that it describes is very different from the world that we ordinarily perceive with our senses. Our senses tell us that the physical world is composed of objects possessing colors, odors, and tastes, but materialism tells us that the objects composing the physical world—whether understood ultimately in terms of colorless, odorless, tasteless atoms moving in a void, as Locke and Boyle would have it, or in terms of pure extension, as Descartes would have it—do not in fact possess these qualities. We must conclude, Berkeley reasons, that our ordinary sense experience misleads us, and, therefore, we cannot trust our senses to provide us knowledge about the nature of the real world. Berkeley, then, sees materialism as undermining the authority of our sense experience, which, as a committed empiricist, he takes to be our primary way of knowing the world. In terms

of his maze metaphor, the principles of materialism take us down a series of corridors, all of which lead to skepticism. Let's examine the twists and turns of some of the corridors in detail.

The first aspect of the problem involves indirect or representational realism. As we have seen, the materialists that Berkeley is attacking are committed to two claims:

1. Physical objects are material objects that have "a real absolute being, distinct from and without any relation to their being perceived," or, in other words, physical objects are material objects that exist "without the mind," and
2. "Whatever is immediately perceived is an idea," or, what is the same, 'the mind perceives nothing but its own ideas.'

It is Berkeley's contention that together these two claims inevitably lead to skepticism, for together they forge a gap between the world *as it is in reality* and the world *as it appears to us* that is insurmountable *in principle*. As Berkeley put it in the passage from the Preface cited above, the materialist teaches us to distinguish the "real Nature" of things from "that which falls under our Senses." Berkeley argues that setting things up in this way inevitably leads us to skepticism, because we cannot possibly verify either that material objects cause some of our ideas or that these ideas resemble material objects, since (2) implies that we do not have direct access to the material objects posited in (1). Consider the resemblance relationship. In principle we can verify that *X* resembles *Y* only if we have direct access to *both X* and *Y*. Hence, I can know that the cherry-idea in my mind resembles a cherry only if I have direct access to *both* my cherry-idea and the cherry itself. While the materialist allows that I do have direct access to my cherry-idea—this is entailed by (2), the materialist denies that I have direct access to the cherry itself—this is entailed by (1). The cherry, like all material objects in the materialist's "real world", lies hidden beyond the veil of my perceptions. The "real world" of the materialist, is, as Berkley puts it, "inaccessible to all our faculties." It follows that I cannot possibly verify that that my cherry-idea resembles the cherry itself. I can know that the ideas of redness, sweetness, and roundness are in my mind, but I cannot know that there is in fact a red, sweet, round object in the material world that is causing and that resembles these ideas. More generally, given the

materialist's commitments, I cannot possibly verify—and, hence, I cannot know—that the way the world *appears to me* is in fact the way the world *really is*.

The problem with materialism, though, is not merely that we cannot *verify* that our ideas are caused by and resemble material objects. Berkeley contends that our ideas *cannot possibly* be caused by and resemble material objects. This is because ideas and matter are so fundamentally different in nature—they belong to two separate ontological categories. It is unclear, Berkeley argues, how *inert* matter could *act* upon our minds to cause ideas in the first place. Moreover, when we judge that *X* resembles *Y*, we determine that we can ascribe (at least some of) the same predicates to both *X* and *Y*. For example, in judging that a certain cherry resembles a certain crab apple, I determine that the cherry and the crab apple share such properties as being red, being round, and tasting tart. But Berkeley argues that because ideas and matter are, according to the materialist's own hypothesis, fundamentally different in nature we cannot ascribe the same properties to them. To do so involves committing what the English philosopher Gilbert Ryle (1900–76) famously referred to as a 'category mistake'—the error of ascribing to something of one ontological category a feature attributable only to another. This reasoning underlies Berkeley's "Likeness Principle"—"it is impossible…to conceive or understand how any thing but an idea can be like an idea"—which is a key premise in one of his primary arguments against matter in the First Dialogue. Because we cannot ascribe the same properties to our ideas and matter, the materialist is wrong to even suggest that our ideas can resemble material objects. But if it is not even possible that our ideas should resemble material objects—and, as the materialist agrees, all of our knowledge is derived from our ideas—then it is not possible that we should know material objects.

But all of this, Berkeley believes, only points to an even more fundamental problem with materialism. If the materialist denies that we can describe the real world in terms of our ordinary experience, what possible meaning can the terms that the materialist uses to describe the physical world have? Berkeley contends that in fact they can have no meaning—they are literally nonsensical. The materialist describes the real world in abstract terms that are so far removed from ordinary experience as to be utterly unintelligible, he argues. Hence, we *cannot even conceive* of the "real world" described by scientific materialism. Again, the objects that we

experience have colors, tastes, and odors, but this, the materialist tells us, is only how things appear to us, it is not really how things are. Cherries, for example, on the materialist's view, are not *really* red, tart, and fragrant—they are *really* combinations of mind-independent primary qualities supported by 'a supposition we know not what.' Berkeley's point is that we have not ever—indeed, we *could not* ever— *experience* a cherry for what it "really is" on the materialist's view. We have never experienced a colorless, tasteless, odorless cherry that is nonetheless round and possesses a certain size and mass, nor could we ever—even by the materialist's own admission—experience the material substratum that supposedly supports the cherry's roundness, extension, and mass. Again, on the materialist's view, the cherry's "true nature, its absolute external entity, is…concealed…[and] inaccessible to all our faculties."

As an empiricist, Berkeley is committed to the view that all of our ideas—and, hence, all of our knowledge—are derived from experience. This implies that what we can think or reason about is limited by our experience. Therefore, if we cannot in principle experience the sorts of objects posited by the materialist, then we cannot even *conceive of* the sorts of objects described by the materialist. The materialist may speak of colorless, tasteless, odorless atoms in a void or Cartesian pure extension, but these are really only a 'fictions of our own brain.' Materialists, Berkeley believes, commit the fundamental error of taking these fictions for reality.

Just as he believed that scientific materialism invariably leads to skepticism, Berkeley also believed that it fosters atheism. The trend of science has long been to replace explanations of natural events by reference to the activity of a supernatural agent (or agents) with explanations by means of other natural phenomena. With the rapid growth of the sciences in the 17th century, naturalistic interpretations of a variety of phenomena became more and more prevalent. Proponents of the so-called *mechanical philosophy* maintained that all physical phenomena can be explained in terms of matter in motion. At the conclusion of the 17th century, Isaac Newton's (1642–1727) theory of matter displaced earlier versions of mechanical philosophy. Newton allowed that particles of matter act upon one another at a distance through attractive and repulsive forces, and while Newton himself saw these forces as agents of divine action in the material world, his concepts were very soon detached from their theistic context. Newton's ideas were totally secularized in the astronomical theory of Pierre

Simon de Laplace (1749–1827). It is said that when Napoleon I was shown Laplace's work he commented on the absence of any mention of God, to which Laplace is supposed to have replied, "I have no need of that hypothesis."

Berkeley seems almost prescient in anticipating how quickly Newton's theistic materialism would evolve into Laplace's atheistic materialism. While virtually all of the materialists of his day were theists and regarded God as the designer and creator of the material world, Berkeley clearly saw that the connection between materialism and theism is a tenuous one. The two theses are logically independent of one another and so can easily be separated in the manner of Laplace. Moreover, materialism has the explanatory power to account for natural phenomena independent of theism. Locke himself conceded in the *Essay* that one cannot prove that it is impossible that matter should be capable of thought (4.3.6). If it is possible to explain all physical *and* mental phenomena in terms of matter in motion, then the materialist truly "has no need of God."

Where materialism inevitably leads us down the dark corridors of skepticism and atheism, Berkeley argues that his immaterialism leads us to knowledge of the real world, establishes the existence of God, and leads to a proper understanding of His direct and active role in the world. "If the principles, which I here endeavor to propagate, are admitted for true;" Berkeley writes in the Preface to the *Dialogues*, "the consequences which, I think, evidently flow from them are that atheism and skepticism will be utterly destroyed…" (54). Let's now turn to consider the main tenets of Berkeley's immaterialism.

Immaterialism

On Berkeley's diagnosis, materialists are led to skepticism because their philosophical notion of reality departs radically from our common, everyday notion of reality. When ordinary people, as opposed to philosophers and scientists, talk about what is real, they are talking about what they directly experience with their five senses, not about some hidden reality that is beyond our perception and apprehension. When they refer to physical objects—such as books, desks, chairs, and teacups—they are referring to those things of which they are directly aware. They believe that the very things that we see, touch, taste, and smell *are themselves* the

objects of the real world. As noted earlier, Berkeley shares with the materialists the premise that we directly perceive only our ideas. His immaterialism is the product of combining the ordinary person's conception of reality and this shared premise. Berkeley makes this plain in the Third Dialogue (143) when he has Philonous say,

> I do not pretend to be a setter-up of new notions. My endeavors tend only to unite and place in a clearer light that truth which was before shared between the vulgar and the philosophers—the former being of opinion that *those things they immediately perceive are the real things*, and the latter that *the things immediately perceived are ideas which exist only in the mind*—which two notions put together do, in effect, constitute the substance of what I advance.

When the ordinary person's conception of reality,

1. Those things that we immediately perceive are real things (*i.e.*, physical objects),

is united with the philosopher's opinion that

2. Those things that we immediately perceive are ideas,

we are naturally, though perhaps surprisingly, led to conclude that

3. Real things (*i.e.*, physical objects) are ideas, or, better, collections of ideas.

What is more, if ideas must exist in a mind,

4. Real things (*i.e.*, physical objects) must exist in a mind.

Claim (4) is at the core of Berkeley's idealism—again, 'idealism' is synonymous with 'immaterialism' throughout—and it is directly opposed to the materialist's claim that physical objects are material objects that exist "without the mind." In the remainder of this section we will consider the main tenets of Berkeley's immaterialism, including his views on the nature of physical objects, the nature of finite minds, the relationship between physical objects and the mind of God, and the relationship between finite minds and the mind of God. We will consider along the way what implications Berkeley takes his views to have for skepticism, atheism, and empirical science.

Where Descartes and Locke were proponents of a *substance theory* with respect to physical objects—they maintained that a physical object is composed not only of its various qualities but *also* an underlying substance to which these qualities belong—Berkeley was a proponent of a *bundle theory* with respect to physical objects. He maintained that physical objects are no more than the sum of their qualities or properties. In order to understand this view, let's return to Locke for a moment. In the *Essay* he wrote:

> The mind being, as I have declared, furnished with a great number of the simple ideas, conveyed in by the senses as they are found in exterior things…takes notice also that a certain number of these simple ideas go constantly together; which being presumed to belong to one thing, and words being suited to common apprehensions, and made use of for quick dispatch, are called, so united in one subject, by one name; which, by inadvertency, we are apt afterward to talk of and consider as one simple idea, which indeed is a compilation of many ideas together: because, as I have said, not imagining how these simple ideas *can* subsist by themselves, we accustom ourselves to suppose some *substratum* in which they do subsist, and from which they do result, which therefore we call *sub-stance*. (2.23.1)

Now Berkeley is willing to follow Locke some way here. Like Locke, Berkeley believes that our experience is made up of a continuous flow of simple ideas and that we discern patterns in this flow of ideas. We notice that some ideas are regularly accompanied by other ideas. Over time we come to regard these patterns as forming a unity, a thing, and we introduce names for these things. On the basis of this Locke goes on to infer that these things must have a *natural* unity in virtue of inhering in a material substance. This inference, Berkeley believes, is mistaken. Things have no unity beyond that which the mind imposes upon them.

The following passage, spoken by Philonous in the Third Dialogue, nicely illustrates Berkeley's bundle theory of physical objects and its implications for our knowledge of these objects.

> I see this cherry, I feel it, I taste it—and I am sure *nothing* cannot be seen, or felt, or tasted—it is therefore *real*. Take away the sensations of softness, moisture, redness, tartness, and you take away the cherry. Since it is not a being distinct from sensations, a cherry, I say, is nothing but a congeries of sensible impressions, or ideas perceived by various senses, which ideas are united into one thing—or have one name given them—by the mind because they are observed to attend each other. Thus, when the palate is affected with such a particular taste, the sight is affected with a red color, the touch with roundness, softness, etc. Hence, when I see and feel and taste in sundry certain manners, I am sure the cherry exists or is real, its reality being in my opinion nothing abstracted from those sensations. But if by the word "cherry" you mean an unknown nature distinct from all those sensible qualities, and by its "existence" something distinct from its being perceived, then, indeed, I own, neither you nor I, nor any one else, can be sure it exists. (131)

A cherry, like all physical objects, is nothing more than a collection of certain sensible qualities or properties. Arguments in the First Dialogue are intended to establish that *all* sensible qualities—primary and secondary qualities alike—just are ideas, whose existence depends upon their being perceived. So, Berkeley's idealism entails that physical objects like the cherry are nothing more than collections of ideas in the mind. The particular cherry involved here is simply a collection of certain particular ideas of softness, moistness, redness, roundness, tartness, *etc*., and we are not justified in assuming that there is anything to the cherry above and beyond these ideas.

The claim that physical objects exist only as ideas in the mind initially seems to be preposterous. When his contemporary, the famous lexicographer Samuel Johnson, was told of Berkeley's view, Johnson declared, "I refute it *thus*!" as he kicked a large stone on the ground. After all, Johnson reasoned, how can one kick a collection of ideas in a mind? Even Berkeley's good friend Jonathan Swift ridiculed the view, as when he instructed his servants not to open the door to Berkeley, since Berkeley believed that doors were not really there. Johnson and Swift's attempts to demonstratively refute Berkeley's idealism reflect a very common misunderstanding of his view. Johnson and Swift failed to understand that Berkeley's idealism does not deny the existence of ordinary physical objects such as stones and doors at all. The solidity of Johnson's stone and the solidity of Swift's door, Berkeley would argue, *just are* sensible qualities that constitute in part those physical objects. Berkeley's analysis of physical objects leaves intact all of our experience related to those objects —that is, his analysis does not deny to physical objects anything that we experience, like the solidity of stones and doors. What, then, *is* omitted in the idealist's analysis of physical objects? Berkeley would say only some "unknown nature distinct from all those sensible qualities"— that is, only something that we cannot see, touch, smell, taste, or hear. But since we cannot even conceive of what this might be, nothing of importance at all is omitted in the idealist's analysis of physical objects.

Berkeley repeatedly stresses that his claim that physical objects must exist in a mind does *not* entail that physical objects like stones, doors, and cherries do not really exist, but only that their existence is dependent upon their being perceived by a mind. Contrary to Hylas' claim that "To *exist* is one thing, and to be perceived is another," Berkeley claims that, for

physical objects, to exist just *is* to be perceived. In his *Principles*, Berkeley had put the point this way, the *esse* (being) of physical objects is *percipi* (to be perceived). The real world is not distinct from the world we immediately experience, as the materialists would have it; rather, the real world *just is* the world of our immediate experience. By making this identification, Berkeley claims that the idealist avoids skepticism in the simplest way possible. Because there is *no gap at all* between the world as it is and the world as it appears to us, one cannot even suggest that things are not as they appear to us. If I see, feel, and taste a cherry, I cannot possibly doubt that a cherry exists, Berkeley claims. Where materialism requires that we greet our sense experience with distrust, idealism entails that we should take our sense experience at face value.

Though Berkeley regards the idea of *material* substance as dispensable, contradictory, and ultimately unintelligible, he is not opposed to the idea of *substance as such*. He agrees with Locke that qualities cannot float freely about—a quality must be a quality *of something*. But because he believes that all sensible qualities *just are* ideas, he concludes that they must be qualities of a *spiritual* substance. "The mind, spirit, or soul," Philonous explains in the Third Dialogue, "is that indivisible, unextended thing which thinks, acts, and perceives" (115). Having said this, Berkeley's spokesman concedes that he has no "proper idea" of spiritual substance, but only a "notion" of it. This is because he does not perceive his or any other mind in the way that he might perceive a cherry or some other physical object. Rather, he is directly aware of his own mind as it manifests itself in thinking and perceiving. (Berkeley does not consider our knowledge of other minds in much detail. He suggests in the Third Dialogue that, by analogy, we attribute a finite spirit to each body that behaves like our own.) So, just as Locke had conceded that he possessed no positive idea of material substance, Berkeley concedes that he possesses no positive idea of spiritual substance. Subsequent empiricists would challenge Berkeley's retention of spiritual substance and argue that *all* talk of substance—material and spiritual—should be dropped. These critics often employed Berkeley's own argumentative strategies to the concept of spiritual substance and argued that the mind itself should be analyzed in terms of a bundle theory. To Berkeley's credit, he anticipated this line of criticism and develops a preemptory response in the Third Dialogue.

Berkeley takes his conception of a finite spirit to entail the immortality of the human soul. He does not elaborate or defend his position, but the view is straightforward and had been advanced by many philosophers, Plato perhaps being the first in the Western tradition. As a *simple* thing— an indivisible, unextended unity lacking parts—the soul, unlike the body, can neither come into existence through a natural process of aggregation nor cease to exist through a natural process of dissolution. Souls can only come into existence through a divine act of creation and cease to exist as the result of a divine act of annihilation.

As this suggests, God plays a central role in Berkeley's worldview, and for this reason his metaphysics is often referred to as '*theistic* idealism'. Hylas and Philonous are devout Christians, and they frequently discuss the theological implications of materialism and immaterialism in their conversations. Berkeley's concerns about atheism and the central place of God in his philosophy should not simply be dismissed as the prejudices of a pious clergyman, though. In the Preface to the *Three Dialogues* he writes,

> As it was my intention to convince skeptics and infidels by reason, so it has been my endeavor strictly to observe the most rigid laws of reasoning. And, to an impartial reader, I hope it will be manifest that the sublime notion of a God and the comfortable expectation of immortality do naturally arise from a close and methodical application of …. (54)

While Berkeley certainly does seek to establish two core tenets of Christian thought—the existence of God and the immortality of the soul—he does not attempt to do this through appeals to faith or revelation but rather by providing *rational proofs* of their truth. Berkeley's methodology is expressly philosophical and his views must be assessed on those merits.

Berkeley offers two arguments for God's existence in the Second Dialogue, and each of these arguments reflects a fundamental role that God plays in his worldview. Berkeley's first argument is novel, and his claims to be the first to offer this argument seem justified. This argument—often referred to as the Continuity Argument—centers on the relationship between physical objects and God's mind. According to Berkeley's idealism, physical objects are collections of ideas that must exist in a mind. But if the existence of physical objects depends upon their being perceived by a mind, what happens when no human mind perceives a physical object for some period of time? When I leave my office, do my books, desk, chair, and teacup simply cease to exist? Common-sense tells us that they do not—that physical objects continue to exist even when no human perceives them.

Berkeley agrees that this is true, but he takes this common-sense belief to yield an interesting conclusion. The fact that the physical world persists as an object independent of its being perceived by any human mind entails that another mind must exist as its abiding subject. Moreover, to account for the vastness, intricacy, unity, and regularity of the physical world, that mind must be infinite and omnipresent. So, when I leave my office, my books, desk, chair, and teacup continue to exist, as they are ideas in the ever-present mind of God. When the common-sense opinion that the physical world persists independent of its being perceived by any human mind, is joined with his idealist conception of the physical world, we are, Berkeley argues, necessarily led to conclude that God exists. The English author and theologian Ronald Knox (1888–1957) attempted to capture the spirit of Berkeley's Continuity Argument in the following limerick:

There was a young man who said, "God,
Must think it exceedingly odd
If he finds that this tree
Continues to be
When there's no one about in the Quad."

REPLY:

Dear Sir: Your astonishment's odd;
I am always about in the Quad.
And that's why the tree
Will continue to be,
Since observed by, Yours Faithfully, God.[8]

Berkeley's second argument for God's existence is a variant of the so-called cosmological argument. The argument here focuses on the relationship between God's mind and the ideas in finite minds. It is self-evident that we have ideas. Moreover, it is clear that we ourselves are not the cause of many of these ideas, since they arise involuntarily. A sighted person standing on Knox's quad facing the tree with her eyes open will see a tree whether she wishes to or not. What then is the cause of these ideas? Berkeley rejects the view that material objects cause these ideas, since matter does not—indeed, cannot—exist. The tree on the quad, Berkeley takes himself to have established, is not a material object; hence, a material

object cannot be the cause of our observer's tree-idea. The simplest and most plausible explanation of the origin of these ideas, Berkeley concludes, is that God Himself is the direct and immediate cause of our ideas. And if this is the case, God exists.

The mechanical philosophers of the 17th and early-18th century had come to conceive the universe as being analogous to a great clock, and they thought of God as the "Great Clockmaker". Once God had built the clock and wound it up, He simply sat back and watched the clock run. Berkeley, by contrast, believed that the world depends upon God every second to keep it running. Not only did God create the world, He also sustains the existence of the physical world in the absence of human (and other finite) perceivers, and is the cause of our ideas when we do perceive physical objects. Where materialism leads to a diminution of God's role in the world—or even implies that He is altogether superfluous—Berkeley's immaterialism reserved for God a direct and active role in the operations of the world.

Berkeley tells us that in addition to refuting skepticism and atheism it is also his intention in the *Dialogues* to "open a method for rendering the sciences more easy, useful, and compendious" (51). Though he does not develop his understanding of science in any detail in the *Dialogues*,[9] there are some hints at his intriguing view. Materialism was intended to provide a metaphysical foundation for the mechanistic, scientific world-view that was in its ascendancy in the 17th and early-18th century. Given his disdain for materialism, one might mistakenly believe that Berkeley was antagonistic towards science itself. It should be emphasized that Berkeley was *not* critical of science per se. On the contrary, he was a great admirer of Newton and he believed that natural philosophers—to employ the term for scientists used in Berkeley's day—had made significant contributions to human knowledge. What he found deeply problematic in the science of his day was, as we have seen, its strong propensity towards *scientific realism*. Scientists of this period, like Boyle and Newton, believed that their theories described the features of a real (mind-independent) but unobservable world. They aimed to explain a material world underlying observed phenomena—that is, they aimed to describe physical objects as they are intrinsically in themselves, independent of how these objects are perceived or experienced by humans. Accordingly, these scientists believed that theoretical terms—like 'atom' and 'mass'—refer to real things, out there, in the world, and

scientific laws describe in the most general terms objective principles that govern these things.

Locke was a paradigm realist about science. He endorsed the "corpuscularian hypothesis," maintaining that physical objects are aggregates of invisible corpuscles of matter, which are held together by some unknown force (4.3.16), and that these objects act upon one another "by impulse, the only way we can conceive bodies to operate in." (2.8.11) Like nearly all of his contemporaries, then, Locke believed that scientific explanations are ultimately mechanical explanations—that is, the explanation of any given event will involve identifying the bodily motions that caused the event. The scientist's job is to discover and articulate the fundamental laws of motion that govern interactions between bodies. Locke is a realist about science because he believes that the theoretical term 'corpuscles of matter' refers in fact to discrete parts of the real world, even though we cannot observe these minute particles. Moreover, he believes that the scientific laws governing the interactions between these particles and the physical objects they constitute are objective—they are literally out there waiting to be discovered by scientists like Newton.

Berkeley aims to retain science while rejecting realism about the physical world. He does this by offering an alternative conception of science, a form of *scientific instrumentalism*. Contrary to Boyle, Newton, and Locke, Berkeley believes that scientific theories do not describe a world above and beyond observed phenomena. Rather, scientific theories are instruments or tools that describe patterns *in the phenomena itself*. The aim of science, Berkeley has Philonous say in the Third Dialogue, is "to explain the *phenomena*…to show how we come to be affected with ideas, in that manner and order wherein they are imprinted on our senses" (125). On Berkeley's view, then, scientists attempt to discover and express regularities in observed phenomena, and they are not concerned about anything that might exist independent of these phenomena. Where the realist believes that theoretical terms refer to real, though unobserv-able, objects in the world, we have already seen Berkeley suggest that scientific terms are a "fiction of our own brain." By this he means that theoretical terms are explanatory constructs—these terms do not have the function of naming things in the world; rather, they have the function of facilitating explanations and predictions of our observations. Berkeley, like other instrumentalists, would also deny that scientific theories are "true" in the sense that they accurately

describe a "real world" existing "out there". Rather, the value of a scientific theory lies solely in its explanatory and predictive power—that is, its ability to explain our current experience in terms of our past experience, and its ability to predict future experience in terms of past and current experience.[10]

If science is reconceived in a manner consistent with immaterialism, "it will not follow," Philonous says, "that philosophers have been doing nothing; for by observing and reasoning upon the connection of ideas, they discover the laws and methods of nature, which is a part of knowledge both useful and entertaining" (125). Immaterialism, Berkeley believes, does not undermine science at all; rather, it places science on a new, more solid foundation. Science continues to investigate the laws of nature; only we come to a new understanding of what these laws are laws *of*. Many commentators have seen in Berkeley's philosophy of science an anticipation of the views of figures like James Clerk Maxwell (1831–1879), Ernst Mach (1838–1916), and Albert Einstein (1879–1955), which finally succeeded in displacing the early-modern conception of science.[11] What is more, scientists today tend to understand their discipline in a way much more like Berkeley than Newton and Locke. Particle physicists, for example, do not take theoretical concepts to be observational concepts—concepts that apply in experience—but take them to be tools that are constructed to facilitate the development and exposition of sophisticated mathematical models.

A SYNOPSIS OF THE *THREE DIALOGUES*

Having considered Berkeley's general program in some detail, let's turn now to consider the specific arguments that he employs in the *Dialogues* to carry out that program. The primary goals of each dialogue and the main arguments that Berkeley employs to achieve these goals are presented in the following summary.

The First Dialogue

The First Dialogue begins with Hylas and Philonous agreeing to accept as true that opinion—materialism or immaterialism—"which, upon examination, shall appear most agreeable to common sense and remote

from skepticism" (58). The *skeptic* is one who "denies the reality of sensible things or professes the greatest ignorance of them" (59), and *sensible things* are "those [things] only which are immediately perceived by sense" (61). Hylas and Philonous further agree that sensible things "are nothing else but so many sensible qualities or combinations of sensible qualities" (61). What we immediately perceive are qualities of objects, and only by perceiving their qualities do we perceive objects themselves, for "if you take away all sensible qualities, there remains nothing sensible" (61). Hylas now introduces the materialist's core thesis, claiming that sensible things have "a real absolute being, distinct from and without any relation to their being perceived" (61). The arguments that Philonous offers in this dialogue are intended to establish two conclusions at once: first, that *all* sensible things exist only in the mind—that is, all sensible things depend for their existence upon being perceived, and, second, that the belief in material substance entails the denial of the reality of sensible things—that is, skepticism. If not convinced of the truth of these conclusions at the end of the First Dialogue, Hylas is at least reduced to a state of perplexity.

Having agreed that sensible things are nothing else but combinations of sensible qualities, Philonous sets out to prove that all sensible qualities are mind-dependent. The first set of qualities that he considers includes heat, tastes, smells, sounds, and colors—those so-called secondary qualities. Here (61–73) Berkeley employs two argumentative strategies. He was far from the first to utilize these strategies and proponents of the primary-secondary quality distinction like Locke frequently employed them in order to draw that distinction. The first strategy—often referred to as either the Pleasure/Pain Strategy or Assimilation Strategy—involves the claim that these qualities are identical to sensations of pleasure and pain that are undeniably mind-dependent. An intense degree of heat, for example, is said to be identical to a great pain. Since pain is undeniably mind-dependent, heat too must be mind-dependent. The second strategy—the Relativity or Conflicting Appearances Strategy—involves the claim that these qualities may vary with the perceiver or the observation conditions. What is bitter to one person may taste sweet to another, or what is one color when viewed with the naked eye may be a different color when viewed by the same person under a microscope. In such cases the object being observed does not itself change, but the quality perceived does. But if these qualities exist outside of the mind in an external body, as Hylas claims, then one would

think that they could not admit of any alteration without some change in the external body itself. Philonous applies these two modes of argument to each of the so-called secondary qualities and concludes that all of these qualities are mind-dependent.

Hylas now (73) avails himself of the primary-secondary quality distinction, conceding that while it is true that *secondary* qualities are mind-dependent, *primary* qualities really exist in external bodies and they do not depend for their existence upon being perceived. Philonous' first response is to claim that extension (size), figure (shape), motion, and solidity all exhibit a relativity to the observer similar to that of the socalled secondary qualities. What is immense in size to a mite or a flea, for example, is not so to a human. Hence, the Relativity Strategy, which establishes the mind-dependence of so-called secondary qualities, also shows that so-called primary qualities are mind-dependent. Philonous goes on to introduce a third argumentative strategy that seems to be original to Berkeley (78). This Inseparability Strategy turns on the claim that our ideas of primary qualities cannot be abstracted—separated in thought—from all ideas of secondary qualities. We cannot, for example, frame the idea of a cherry that possesses *only* properties such as size, mass, and shape and *not any* properties such as color, taste, or odor. If so-called secondary qualities are mind-dependent—as Philonous purports to have already been established—and if primary qualities and secondary qualities are inseparable in thought, so-called primary qualities must also be mind-dependent. If *all* qualities are mind-dependent, it is not possible to draw a principled distinction between two classes of qualities and the primary-secondary distinction collapses.

At this point (79) Hylas worries that he has failed to make an important distinction between an "object" and a "sensation"—between the objects in the external world that we perceive and the "act of the mind" that is involved in our perceiving these objects. Hylas admits that sensations must exist in a mind, but he maintains that objects can exist without the mind. Philonous' response turns on the claim that we are altogether passive in sensation. If this is the case, sensing cannot properly be described as an act of the mind and the distinction is already in jeopardy. But what is more, Hylas concedes that if sensing does not involve action, it is possible that a passive, unthinking thing should perceive. When Hylas recognizes that his distinction leads to what he himself regards to be a manifest contradiction, he abandons his distinction between object and sensation.

Hylas now (82) introduces the notion of material substance, arguing—just as Locke had—that he cannot conceive how qualities can exist without being supported by a material substratum. Again like Locke, Hylas claims not to have any "proper positive idea" of material substratum, but only a "relative notion" of it. This, recall, is because material substance, by definition, is featureless—the substratum itself is not extended, shaped, or colored; rather, the substratum is what supposedly "supports" or "stands under" qualities such as these. Philonous proceeds to argue that this notion of material substance is incoherent. What exactly, he asks Hylas, does it mean to say that material substance "supports" or "stands under" qualities? Material substratum cannot *literally* support or stand under extension, he argues, because only something *itself* extended could do this. Moreover, if Hylas' talk of material substratum's supporting and standing under qualities is only *metaphorical*, then the notion of a material substratum has no verifiable meaning.

At this time Philonous declares that he is willing to abandon his immaterialism and accept materialism as true if Hylas can *so much as conceive of* a sensible body existing independent of the mind. Because Philonous claims that he is willing to allow the entire debate to rest on this point, the argument involved here (84) has come to be referred to as the Master Argument.[12] Hylas thinks that responding to this challenge is a simple matter—"What more easy," he wonders, "than to conceive a tree or house existing by itself, independent of, and unperceived by any mind whatsoever?" (84). Philonous points out, however, that as soon as Hylas conceives of such a tree or house, these things exist *in Hylas' own mind*. Berkeley believes that any attempt to meet Philonous' challenge is bound to be self-defeating, and, hence, it is impossible for us *to even think about* a sensible thing existing independent of its being perceived. This implies that we cannot even imagine the sort of "real world" described by materialists.

Hylas acknowledges the force of Philonous' preceding arguments; nonetheless, he confesses that he is unable to shake himself of the belief that material objects exist in the external world as mind-independent "originals" or "archetypes" of our ideas. He admits that at this point in the conversation (89) he cannot give any good reason for retaining this belief, but he is determined to hold onto it so long as it is *possible* that it is true. And so, he indirectly challenges Philonous to prove that is utterly impossible that there should be material objects of which our ideas are

mental representations. The so-called Likeness Argument (90) purports to show that ideas and material objects are so completely unalike that the former could not possibly represent the latter. Where material objects are supposedly stable, fixed, and constant, ideas are fleeting and perpetually changing. Where material objects, by hypothesis, are not perceivable at all, ideas are immediately perceived; and where material objects are colorless and inaudible, our ideas involve colors and sounds. These considerations lead Philonous and Hylas to conclude that ideas can represent nothing but other ideas. What is more, if the mind immediately perceives nothing but ideas—as both Philonous and Hylas agree—it cannot perceive something else—material objects—by perceiving ideas. Hence, it is not even a bare possibility that there should be material objects of which our ideas are mental representations.

At the conclusion of the First Dialogue Philonous claims to have established that *all* sensible things are mind-dependent. It is not conceivable that any sensible thing should exist independent of its being perceived by a mind, nor is it even a bare possibility that our ideas should represent material objects. These conclusions, Philonous notes, imply that the recalcitrant materialist must be "a downright *skeptic"* (91). Hylas ends the conversation by saying, "For the present I am, if not entirely convinced, at least silenced" (91).

The Second Dialogue

Hylas is so preoccupied with thinking about the preceding day's conversation that he is late to meet Philonous on the second day. His primary worry is that Philonous' immaterialism cannot provide an adequate account of the origin of our ideas, and the issue of the source of our ideas is a central topic of the Second Dialogue. Hylas finds the "modern way of explaining things" very attractive. He thinks the materialist's mechanistic theory of perception provides the most plausible account of the origin of our ideas (93). Philonous makes quick work of dismissing this view by reminding Hylas that this theory of perception involves the admitted inconceivability of matter's acting on the mind. Moreover, the brain itself is simply a complex of ideas and as such cannot figure in an account of the cause of our other ideas.

With no immediate response at hand, Hylas feels defeated and concedes that he is a skeptic (94). The only comfort he finds in his concession is that he believes Philonous too must be a skeptic, but Philonous quickly denies this. He explains to Hylas that the general conclusion of the First Dialogue —that all sensible things are mind-dependent—leads to skepticism only because Hylas attributes an "absolute" or mind-independent existence to sensible things. Philonous points out that he has never maintained this. Quite the opposite, Philonous has maintained all along that sensible things exist just in case they are perceived by a mind. For physical objects, to be is to be perceived. So when they are perceived, physical objects really do exist. It is materialism, which maintains that sensible things exist independent of the mind, that inevitably leads to skepticism, and not immaterialism, which maintains that sensible things depend upon the mind for their existence.

Philonous quickly moves from clarifying the relationship between materialism, immaterialism, and skepticism to introducing Berkeley's novel Continuity Argument for God's existence (97–8). As explained earlier, Berkeley takes the fact that the physical world persists as an object independent of its being perceived by any human mind to entail that another mind must exist as its abiding subject. If physical objects exist only so long as they are perceived by a mind, and if physical objects persist even at times when no human mind perceives them, then there must be another mind in which the ideas that constitute these objects exist at these times. Moreover, given the vastness, intricacy, unity, and regularity of the sensible world, that mind must be "an infinite omnipresent Spirit"—that is, God. So while Philonous does not attribute to physical objects an *"absolute existence* out of the minds of [all] spirits," as Hylas does, he does allow that sensible things are "real" in the sense that their existence is independent of all *human*—or, more generally, all *finite*—minds.

Philonous now (98) reverts to the question of the cause of our ideas. We know that we can generate some ideas through the activity of our own minds. At the same time, however, we know that we are not the cause of many of our ideas. In sensation we are altogether passive, and, hence, some of our ideas are real in the sense that they are not simply products of our own mind. Where, then, do these ideas originate? Given that ideas are essentially dependent upon the mind, they must be caused by another active mind, Philonous argues. And, again, it cannot be just any mind. It must be a

very powerful mind to be able to force ideas upon us against our wills; it must be exceedingly intelligent to create ideas in regular and uniform ways; it must be permanent to account for things we do not currently perceive. In short, it must be the mind of God. This is a version of the Cosmological Argument—an argument that God's existing is the only sufficient explanation for certain contingent facts—cast in terms of immaterialism. While presenting his own theory of perception, Berkeley takes the opportunity to distinguish his view from Malebrenche's (99).

Hylas acknowledges the novelty and force of Philonous' arguments, but he attempts to resurrect the notion of matter by suggesting that we should understand 'matter' as a "third nature" that acts as an intermediary between God's mind and our own (100). He proposes that we construe matter as a "subordinate and limited cause of our ideas"—that is, God creates matter, and matter in turn causes our ideas. Philonous responds by arguing that, even if we grant for the sake of argument the dubious assumption that matter exists, it is unclear how an inactive, unthinking thing, such as matter, could be the cause of thought. Activity in general involves volition, and, hence, the cause of our ideas must involve volition. Only spirits then are causally efficacious. The materialist cannot argue that matter is active by virtue of motion, since it was established in the First Dialogue that motion itself is an idea and ideas themselves are perfectly passive and inert. Hylas now offers a second conception of matter, suggesting that we should think of it as "an *instrument* subservient to the Supreme Agent in the production of our ideas" (102). Philonous quickly rejects this understanding of matter, arguing that an instrument is required only when volition is not sufficient to do the job, and surely an omnipotent God does not need to employ instruments to do what He can do through will alone. Hylas shifts definitions once more, now (104) claiming that we should think of matter as "an *occasion*" upon which God causes us to have ideas. Here Berkeley is clearly creating for himself the opportunity to critique Malebranche's occasionalism. Again, according to occasionalists like Malebranche, mind and matter do not causally interact with one another at all; rather, God causes changes in the mental realm "on the occasion of" changes in the material realm. Philonous argues that immaterialism has all of the explanatory power of occasionalism but is the simpler theory. Immaterialism, Philonous explains, can account for the order and regularity of our ideas exclusively in terms of the power and wisdom of God, without

positing the existence of insensible, inert matter. Hylas goes on to offer a fourth definition of 'matter', telling Philonous that the term should be understood to refer to "the general abstract idea of *entity."* Matter so understood is "neither substance nor accident, thinking nor extended being, neither cause, instrument, nor occasion, but something entirely unknown, distinct from all these" (106). Philonous challenges Hylas to frame in his mind the idea corresponding to this description. Upon reflection, Hylas concedes that he cannot do this. This, Philonous explains, is because the idea of entity in general is an empty concept—it has no meaningful content whatsoever. Hence, when the term 'matter' is used in this most abstract and obscure sense it is "mere jargon" which 'means nothing at all' (107).

Philonous has rejected every conception of matter that Hylas has proposed as superfluous to an explanation of the origin of our ideas. Berkeley's spokesman now issues a broader challenge to Hylas, asking him to show him "that thing in nature which needs matter to explain or account for it" (108). The implication of this question, of course, is that we do not need to posit matter's existence in order to explain *any* natural phenomena whatsoever. Hylas quickly answers the challenge by asserting, "The reality of things cannot be maintained without supposing the existence of matter" (108). Philonous responds by claiming that the reality of sensible things is sufficiently proved by our perceiving them, and, even if it were possible that matter should exist as Hylas' insensible "something in general," it is entirely unclear how positing the existence of such a thing would help assure us of the reality of sensible things. Hylas grasps at his last straw, granting that it is highly *improbable* that matter qua abstract entity should exist yet maintaining that it is nonetheless *possible* that matter so understood should exist (108). But how, Philonous asks, could one show that it is impossible for such a thing to exist? Because we cannot even frame the idea of entity in general—since the concept is completely devoid of meaningful content—we cannot show that the idea or concept is internally inconsistent, and, hence, that the existence of matter so understood is impossible. But this is only to confirm that when the term 'matter' is used in this most abstract and obscure sense it literally means nothing at all.

By the end of the Second Dialogue Berkeley takes it as established that we do not need to appeal to matter to explain *anything* in nature, including our perceptions. Matter, then, is a dispensable hypothesis. But what is more,

abstract understandings of 'matter' are completely untenable. Either 'matter', when it has meaning, is self-contradictory, and, hence, it cannot exist; or it has no meaning at all, and, hence, it is literally nonsense. The Second Dialogue closes with Hylas conceding that Philonous has "proved that matter is impossible" and no more "can be said in defense of it" (110).

The Third Dialogue

As the Third Dialogue opens, Hylas is in dire straits. He has abandoned his belief in matter, but he explains to Philonous that this belief seemed as certain to him as any he had ever held. Consequently, abandoning materialism has led him to doubt the truth of *all* of his beliefs. Not only does Hylas now claim not to know "the real nature of any one thing in the universe," but he also goes on to claim, "it is impossible any real corporeal thing should exist in nature" (112–13). After reflecting on the previous days' conversations, he has come to believe that *any* account of reality will inevitably lead to skepticism, and he tells Philonous that if he will only explain his own view, he will show him that this is so. Remember that many readers of Berkeley's *Principles* thought that his immaterialism was simply another form of skepticism. Berkeley's design here is to correct that misunderstanding of his view, and to emphasize the antiskeptical nature of immaterialism. He wants to make it clear once and for all that denying the existence of matter does not entail denying the existence of physical (corporeal) objects, as Hylas has suggested.

Hylas' challenge requires Philonous to provide an overt statement of the "scheme of things" that he proposes to introduce in lieu of materialism, and Philonous obliges Hylas by presenting a clear and concise statement of immaterialism and his main argument for that view:

> Wood, stones, fire, water, flesh, iron, and the like things which I name and discourse of are things that I know. And I should not have known them but that I perceived them by my senses; and things perceived by the senses are immediately perceived; and things immediately perceived are ideas; and ideas cannot exist without the mind; their existence therefore consists in being perceived; when, therefore, they are actually perceived, there can be no doubt of their existence. (114)

As explained earlier, Berkeley believes that his conclusion—that physical objects are (collections of) ideas whose existence consists in being perceived—follows from uniting the common belief that physical objects are

immediately perceived by the senses and the philosopher's opinion that the only things immediately perceived are ideas. Contrary to Hylas' claim, it certainly *is* possible that physical things should exist in nature, so long as we understand that physical objects are no more than (collections of) ideas whose existence consists in being perceived. Moreover, Berkeley and Philonous believe that they avoid skepticism in the simplest way possible, by accepting that we can only know how the world appears to us, but then by insisting that the world of appearance simply *is* the real world. Philonous tells Hylas that his skeptical crisis will continue only so long as he persists in "distinguishing between the reality and sensible appearances of things" (113).

At this point (113) Philonous allows Hylas to take the lead role in examining immaterialism, and the remainder of the Third Dialogue consists of Hylas presenting and Philonous responding to a variety of objections to immaterialism. Here Berkeley subjects his view to the most serious criticisms that he can imagine, and he shows remarkable foresight as he himself raises most of the major objections to immaterialism that his contemporaries and subsequent generations of critics would raise. In responding to these objections Berkeley and Philonous do not merely repeat what has come before, but they develop and refine immaterialism in light of Hylas' criticisms. The objections are not presented systematically, but rather as they occur to Hylas, which heightens the literary effect of the work. His various objections are wide-ranging as they are variously based on metaphysical, epistemological, scientific, and theological grounds. I will not address all of these objections here, but will focus on several that are traditionally regarded as being most important.

Hylas' first objection to immaterialism is often referred to as the Parity Objection (116). He suggests that Philonous' arguments against *material* substance tell equally well against *spiritual* or *mental* substance. So if Philonous rejects material substance, he must, by parity, reject mental substance. This objection would be repeated by, and is often incorrectly thought to originate with Hume. Philonous responds to the objection by arguing that in fact there is no parity between material and mental substance, for while the idea of material substance is either self-contradictory or meaningless, the notion of mental substance is neither. Indeed, Philonous contends that we have direct and immediate access to our

own minds through reflection or inner-experience. Hence, talk of mental substance is entirely consistent with empiricism.

In two places (118 and 121) Hylas presses the claim that immaterialism cannot distinguish what is real from what is imaginary, or, similarly, immaterialism cannot account for illusions. The materialist, Hylas argues, has a very natural way to draw this distinction. For the materialist, imaginings or illusions are simply in the mind and have no correspondent in the external world. Drawing the distinction between what is real and what is imaginary or illusory, Hylas believes, requires an external, mind-independent standard. But if all sensible things are in the mind, as Philonous contends, we have no such external standard, and, hence, we cannot draw such a distinction.

Philonous argues that the immaterialist can distinguish between figments of the imagination and sensations— "real things"—in terms of the force and vivacity of perceptions: whereas imaginings are faint and unclear, sensations are vivid and clear. Moreover, sensations are connected with the perceptions that precede and follow them in ways that imaginings are not, and sensations are independent of the will in a way that imaginings are not. While he does maintain that sensations themselves are never erroneous, Philonous points out that *inferences made on the basis of our sensations* often are mistaken. Having argued that immaterialism provides a satisfactory account of the distinction between what is real and what is imaginary or illusory, Philonous now turns Hylas' own objection back against materialism. In fact, Philonous argues, it is materialism that cannot account for the distinction. By hypothesis the external, mind-independent standard—a material object—that the materialist appeals to in order to draw the distinction is inaccessible in principle, because we only directly experience ideas. We cannot possibly judge our ideas against such a standard because we do not have direct access to it. This reflects a common strategy that Philonous employs in disarming Hylas' objections. He frequently argues that the objection at hand is really a greater problem for materialism than it is for immaterialism.

The last of Hylas' objections to be considered here is that immaterialism has the absurd consequence that two people cannot perceive the same physical object (129). Hylas argues that ideas are private in the sense that no two minds share numerically identical ideas, but physical objects, common-sense tells us, are public in the sense that two people can perceive

the same physical object. Immaterialism reduces physical objects to ideas, and if ideas are private, it seems that no two people can perceive the same physical object. Contrary to common-sense, then, immaterialism seems to imply that physical objects are not public. Philo-nous agrees with Hylas' assertion that ideas are private, but whether this entails that two people cannot perceive the same object depends upon how we understand the term 'same'. If the word 'same' is used in its ordinary sense—where two things are the same when there is no perceived difference between them—then, Philonous claims, two people may indeed see the same thing. But if 'same' refers to some "abstracted idea of identity," as the philosophers claim, then it is unclear whether two people can perceive the same thing, since philosophers disagree about the nature of this abstract idea (129). As usual, Philonous claims that he cannot frame any such idea of absolute identity. For Berkeley and Philonous the criteria employed in judgments about identity are not objective but involve arbitrary conventions.

At any rate, Philonous argues, the problem that Hylas has raised here is just as much a problem for the materialist as it is for the immaterialist, since the materialist shares the premises that we immediately perceive only ideas and no two people share numerically identical ideas. Philonous tells Hylas, "that which counts equally against two contradictory opinions can be a proof against neither" (131), and, on this point, it is a draw between immaterialism and materialism. Hylas argues that these considerations do not tell equally against the materialist because the materialist's external "archetypes"—material objects—allow them to easily judge whether two perceivers see the same thing. Philonous responds that immaterialism allows us to speak of archetypes existing external to all human minds as well (131). A physical object is a collection of ideas existing in the mind of God, and we perceive an object by perceiving some of the ideas in this collection. Two people can perceive different parts of the collection of ideas, thereby perceiving the same object. Hylas concedes, "either that there is no difficulty at bottom in this point or, if there is, that it counts equally against both opinions" (131).

Believing that all of his objections have been satisfactorily addressed, Hylas enthusiastically embraces immaterialism at the end of the *Three Dialogues*. Philonous brings the final conversation to a close by cataloging the advantages of immaterialism (139ff.), and by arming his new convert to defend the view from future objections (141f.). He does the latter in a very

instructive way, identifying some of the common problems underlying Hylas' own objections to immaterialism. Philonous tells Hylas that he often failed to consider first whether the objection that he was offering against immaterialism was also problematic for materialism. Hylas also tended to engage in circular reasoning—that is, he tended to beg the question by making objections to immaterialism based upon the *assumption* that matter exists. The biggest problem with Hylas' objections, though, was that they were based upon a fundamental misunderstanding of immaterialism. Hylas himself concedes that he failed to understand that denying the existence of matter does not entail denying the existence of ordinary physical objects such as desks, chairs, and teacups. So, in the final dialogue Berkeley responds to many of the objections leveled against the view that he had already presented in the *Principles*. He also attempts to clarify and refine his view in such a way as to prevent the common misunderstandings of immaterialism that gave rise to those objections.

THE RECEPTION AND SUBSEQUENT INFLUENCE OF THE *THREE DIALOGUES*

Hylas predicts at the conclusion of the *Three Dialogues* that "men will come into your notions with small difficulty" (143). This bit of optimism on Berkeley's part proved to be unfounded, as his philosophy was generally not well received in the 18th century.[13] Johnson's and Swift's misunderstandings and negative appraisals of Berkeley's worldview were typical of his contemporaries. Despite his best efforts to show that immaterialism does not represent a form of skepticism, many continued to regard Berkeley as a skeptic and a solipsist—someone who believes that only oneself exists—who was simply pretending that he was opposed to these views. And in spite of his attempts to distance himself from Malebranche, many others continued to believe that his immaterialism was founded upon Malebranche's principles.

The fact that Berkeley was seen by many of his contemporaries to be a disciple of Malebranche and was *not* seen as the intellectual heir to Locke, has interesting implications for our understanding of the history of early-modern philosophy. In most classrooms today students are taught that there

was a straightforward, linear development of British empiricism during this period, from Locke to Berkeley to Hume. (A similar story is told about the continental rationalists.) This view emerged late in the 18th century, and is suggested in the writings of the Scottish philosopher Thomas Reid (1710–96) and the German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724–1804). In an essay titled "Bishop Berkeley's sentiments of the nature of Ideas," which is contained in his *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* (1785), Reid, for example, writes,

> Mr. Locke has taught us that all the immediate objects of human knowledge are ideas in the mind. Bishop Berkeley, proceeding upon this foundation, demonstrated, very easily, that there is no material world….But the Bishop, as became his order, was unwilling to give up the world of spirits….Mr. Hume shews no such partiality in favour of the world of spirits. He adopts the theory of ideas in its full extent; and, in consequence, shews that there is neither matter nor mind in the universe; nothing but impressions and ideas.[14]

This picture of the history of British empiricism, and of early-modern philosophy more generally, has recently been forcefully challenged.[15] That Berkeley's work reflects the influence of Malebranche to the point that his own contemporaries took him to be the French thinker's follower tells against the picture of two self-contained philosophical camps developing more or less in isolation of one another.

This is not to deny that Berkeley was an important influence on Hume, of course. Hume himself tells us that Berkeley was one of a number of philosophers who shaped his thought. In a letter to Michael Ramsay, Hume advised his friend that in order to more easily grasp his views in *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739–40) he should read Malebranche's *Search after Truth*, Berkeley's *Principles*, some articles from Bayle's *Dictionary*, and Descartes' *Meditations*.[16] Many of Hume's attacks on representational realism and the primary-secondary quality distinction in both the *Treatise* and *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding* (1748) strongly echo Berkeley. In a footnote in the *Enquiry* Hume acknowledges his indebtedness to Berkeley:

> This argument is drawn from Dr. Berkeley; and indeed most of the writings of that very ingenious author form the best lessons of scepticism, which are to be found either among the ancient or modern philosophers, Bayle not excepted. He professes, however, in his title-page (and undoubtedly with great truth) to have composed this book against the sceptics as well as against the atheists and free-thinkers. But that all his arguments though otherwise intended, are, in reality, merely sceptical, appears from this, that they admit of no answer and produce no

> conviction. Their only effect is to cause that momentary amazement and irresolution and confusion, which is the result of scepticism.[17]

This passage is interesting not only because it is one of the few places in his works where Hume acknowledges another philosopher by name, but also because it reflects the common judgment that Berkeley's view, despite his claims to the contrary, was a skeptical one. Some commentators have argued that Hume found in Berkeley's works not only argumentative ammunition of use in criticizing views he rejected, but also the inspiration for some of his own positive views. For example, Hume's bundle theory of the self may have been inspired by Hylas' suggestion in the Third Dialogue that we should regard the self as "only a system of floating ideas."[18]

Just as Berkeley had bristled when his views were identified with those of Malebranche, Immanuel Kant balked at the suggestion that his views were Berkeleian. After an early reviewer of his *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) accused Kant of being a Berkeleian idealist, Kant attempted to make clear the differences between his "critical idealism" and Berkeley's "dogmatic idealism" in the *Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics* (1783) and in additions to the second edition of the *Critique* (1787). In these places Kant explicitly rejects what he took to be Berkeley's three central theses: that there are no "things in themselves" lying behind the "appearances" we perceive; and, hence, that physical objects are "sheer illusion"; and, therefore, that only minds exist.

Berkeley's most sympathetic reader in the 18th century was the American Samuel Johnson (1696–1772), the first president of King's College, New York (now Columbia University). (This is not the same Samuel Johnson discussed earlier, who claimed to refute Berkeley by kicking a stone.) Johnson traveled to meet Berkeley when the latter was living in Rhode Island, and he subsequently became an immaterialist. Johnson's *Elementa Philosophica* (1752), the first philosophy textbook published in America, developed a number of Berkeleian themes: that physical objects are combinations of ideas which exist only if perceived; that spirits are active, perceiving beings; and that God is the cause of our sense percep-tions. Johnson did not merely recapitulate Berkeley's views, though. In his extensive correspondence with Berkeley he identified potential problems with immaterialism. One of these problems is worth noting here. In the Third Dialogue Philonous claims that things have a double existence, "the one ectypal or natural, the other archetypal and

eternal" (136). Berkeley was not at all forthcoming when Johnson pressed him to clarify this important point about the nature of the relationship between things as ectypes in our minds and things as archetypes in God's mind. He simply wrote, "I have no objection against calling the ideas in the mind of God archetypes of our own. But I object against those archetypes by philosophers supposed to be real things, and to have an absolute rational existence distinct from their being perceived by any mind whatsoever…."[19] In the *Elementa* Johnson described our ideas as faint copies of God's ideas, and explained the notion of "archetypes" in a way that drew heavily from Malebranche and his English follower, John Norris (1657–1711). This is characteristic of the *Elementa*—it is Berkeleian at its core, but draws from other philosophical viewpoints when Johnson thinks that doing so strengthens the immaterialist position.

In 1871 A.C. Fraser issued the first complete edition of Berkeley's works —*Works of George Berkeley, D.D., formerly Bishop of Cloyne*. This ushered in a new era of Berkeley scholarship and a general reappraisal Berkeley's thought. In his review of Fraser's edition, John Stuart Mill, the foremost British empiricist of the nineteenth century, wrote, "of all who, from earliest times, have applied the powers of their minds to metaphysical inquiries, [Berkeley] is the one of greatest philosophical genius: though among these are included Plato, Hobbes, Locke, Hartley, and Hume; Descartes, Spinoza, Leibnitz, and Kant."[20] This is praise of the highest order, even if it is self-serving. Mill regarded himself as a direct intellectual heir to Berkeley, despite the fact that he regarded Berkeley's theological doctrines as embarrassments. In particular Mill saw in Berkeley's idealism an anticipation of his own *phenomenalism*— the doctrine that physical objects are collections of actual *and* possible ideas. In fact, phenomenalism has been described as "Berkeley without God."[21] Where Berkeley held that objects are collections of ideas *actually* existing in some mind, Mill argued that objects are reducible to "permanent *possibilities* of sensation". On Mill's view, objects are composed of ideas that either do exist or at least could exist in some mind. Mill saw that understanding physical objects in this way undermines Berkeley's "favourite argument for Theism"—the Continuity Argument. If an object exists so long as it is possible for it to be perceived, even if no mind actually perceives it at the moment, we need not appeal to God to account for the continued existence of unperceived objects. It is an irony of the history of ideas that some of those most

strongly influenced by Berkeley's conception of the world have been committed atheists.

Like Mill, the American thinker Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914) also reviewed Fraser's edition of Berkeley's works.[22] Peirce saw Berkeley as a progenitor of *pragmatism*—a philosophical tradition which maintains that the meaning of concepts are to be understood in terms of their practical implications, or, alternatively, that the truth of an assertion is to be assessed in terms of its practical consequences. When William James (1842–1910) credited Peirce with being the first pragmatist, Peirce responded, "Berkeley on the whole has more right to be considered the introducer of pragmatism into philosophy than any other one man, though I was more explicit in enunciating it."[23] In his influential *Prag-matism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking* (1907), James acknowledged the pragmatic strains in Berkeley's thought. "Berkeley's criticism of 'matter' was," James wrote, "absolutely pragmatistic. Matter is known as our sensations of color, figure, hardness and the like. They are the cash-value of the term."[24]

In the first-half of the 20th century Berkeley also came to be regarded as an important precursor to *logical positivism*. A.J. Ayer (1910–89) would open his *Language, Truth and Logic* (1936)—perhaps the most well-known statement of positivism—by claiming, "The views which are put forward in this treatise derive from the doctrines of Bertrand Russell and Wittgenstein, which are themselves the logical outcome of the empiricism of Berkeley and David Hume."[25] In this work Ayer defended the verificationist theory of meaning, maintaining that factual statements are meaningful only if they are verifiable by experience. Ayer would employ this theory to argue that metaphysical propositions are literally meaningless. This approach is foreshadowed in Berkeley's arguments that certain understandings of 'matter' are meaningless because they are devoid of empirical content. Ayer also defended his own version of phenomenalism in this work, though he later rejected this view.

Berkeley's critical concern with language and meaning is evident throughout the *Dialogues*. So, it is not surprising he should be regarded as an important forerunner to analytic philosophy in general. The fact that so many diverse philosophers have acknowledged a debt to Berkeley, even as they have rejected core tenets of his worldview, reflects how rich and multifaceted his philosophy truly is.

Endnotes

1. A.A. Luce, *The Dialectic of Immaterialism*, p. 59. McCracken and Tipton (eds.) have provided very helpful selections from the works that influenced Berkeley in *Berkeley's Principles and Dialogues: Background Source Materials*.
2. All references to Locke's *Essay* are to A.C. Fraser (ed.). Parenthetical references indicate: (Book. Chapter. Section).
3. A.A. Luce's *Berkeley and Malebranche* remains the standard account of the influence of Malebranche's *Search* on Berkeley. See also C.J. McCracken, *Malebranche and British Philosophy*, chapter 6.
4. See Popkin's "Berkeley and Pyrrhonism."
5. Of course if the materialist in question is also a dualist, the account is a bit more complicated, and mysterious, than this. For according to the dualist the stimulation of the optical nerves (a physical event in a material substance) somehow causes an idea to arise in the observer's mind (a mental event in a mental substance). Explaining precisely how this occurs, and more generally how a mental substance interacts with a material substance and vice versa, is the so-called "mind-body problem". This problem is just one of the corridors of the philosopher's maze, and Berkeley regards it as a great virtue of his immaterialism that this problem does not arise at all, since on his view there is no material substance whatsoever for minds to interact with.
6. Locke uses the term 'idea' here when he surely means 'quality'. Locke in fact warns us in the *Essay* that he often carelessly uses the term 'idea' when he means to refer to the quality of an external object (2.8.8). This carelessness on Locke's part certainly must have encouraged Berkeley, since it is a fundamental part of his project to demonstrate that all sensible qualities are in fact ideas.
7. Since he is an atomist, Locke regards only individual atoms as material substances proper. Macroscopic objects—such as cherries, books, and teacups—which are composed of atoms, are, strictly speaking, modes of these ultimate or basic individual substances. Locke tends to focus less on this stricter doctrine, and I have followed him here in speaking of macroscopic objects as "individual substances".
8. Quoted in Bertrand Russell's *History of Western Philosophy*, George Allen And Unwin Ltd, London (1946), p.673.
9. For a fuller account of Berkeley's view on the nature of science, see his *Principles* §101–117, his work on mechanics, *De Motu*, and *Siris* §220–250.
10. See, for example, Berkeley's assessment of the relative merits of the Ptolemaic and Copernican systems in *Siris* §228.
11. See, for example, Popper, K., "A Note on Berkeley as a Precursor of Mach and Einstein."
12. The label comes from Gallois, A. "Berkeley's Master Argument."
13. For the reactions of Berkeley's contemporaries to his philosophy, see Berman, D., (ed.) *George Berkeley: Eighteenth-Century Responses*, 2 vols.; McCracken and Tipton (eds.) *Berkeley's Principles and Dialogues: Background Source Materials*, Part II; and Bracken, H. *The Early Reception of Berkeley's Immaterialism: 1710–1733*.
14. Quoted in McCracken and Tipton (eds.), p. 277.
15. See, for example, Loeb, L., *From Descartes to Hume: Continental Metaphysics and the Development of Modern Philosophy*.
16. See McCracken and Tipton, p. 208. Again, note Hume's acknowledgement of the importance of understanding the continental rationalists for comprehending his own thought and the absence of any reference to Locke.
17. Section XII, Part I.
18. See Raynor, D., "Hume and Berkeley's *Three Dialogues*."
19. *Works*, vol. II, p. 292.

Mill's review appeared in the *Fortnightly Review* (November 1871) and is reprinted in *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, J.M. Robson (general editor).

20. G.J. Warnock, *Berkeley*. p. 225.
21. Peirce's review was printed in *The North American Review* and is reprinted in *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, Hartshorne, Weiss, and Burks (eds.).
22. Letter from Peirce to James dated Jan. 23, 1903 in R.B. Perry, *The Thought and Character of William James*, vol. 2, p. 425.
23. pp. 89–90.
24. p. 11.

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A NOTE ON THE TEXT

Three editions of the *Three Dialogues* were published in Berkeley's lifetime. The first edition was published in 1713. The work was reissued, without revisions, in 1725. The third edition, which was revised by Berkeley, was published in 1734. The present edition is based on the 1734 edition. The main variations from the earlier editions are noted. The present edition also contains the Dedication and Preface that Berkeley included in the first two editions but omitted in the third. Berkeley's one footnote (contained in the First Dialogue) is marked by an asterisk. The editor's explanatory notes are numbered, and notes indicating variations in the text are marked by symbols. Spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and editorial style have been modified to conform to current American usage.

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October, 2006
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Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous

The design of which is plainly to demonstrate the reality and perfection of human knowledge, the incorporeal nature of the soul, and the immediate providence of a deity: In opposition to skeptics and atheists.

Also, to open a method for rendering the sciences more easy, useful, and compendious.

BY GEORGE BERKELEY, M.A.

FELLOW OF TRINITY-COLLEGE, DUBLIN

First Printed in the Year 1713

To the Right Honorable The Lord Berkeley of Stratton, Master of the Rolls in the Kingdom of Ireland, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, and One of the Lords of Her Majesty's Most Honorable Privy-Council.*

MY LORD,

The virtue, learning, and good sense which are acknowledged to distinguish your character would tempt me to indulge myself the pleasure men naturally take in giving applause to those whom they esteem and honor; and it should seem of importance to the subjects of Great Britain that they know the eminent share you enjoy in the favor of your sovereign; and the honors she has conferred upon you have not been owing to any application from your lordship, but entirely to Her Majesty's own thought, arising from a sense of your personal merit and an inclination to reward it. But as your name is prefixed to this treatise with an intention to do honor to myself alone, I shall only say that I am encouraged by the favor you have treated me with to address these papers to your lordship. And I was the more ambitious of doing this, because a philosophical treatise could not so properly be addressed to anyone as to a person of your lordship's character, who, to your other valuable distinctions, have added the knowledge and relish of philosophy.

I am, with the greatest respect, My Lord, Your lordship's most obedient and most humble servant,

GEORGE BERKELEY

Notes

* This dedicatory letter appeared in the 1713 and 1725 editions of the *Dialogues*, but was omitted in the 1734 edition. According to his diary, Jonathan Swift (1667–1745) introduced George Berkeley to William Berkeley, Fourth Lord Berkeley of Stratton, (c.1663–1741) at Court in London on April 12, 1713. There is some evidence that the two Berkeleys were distant relatives.

The Preface*

Though it seems the general opinion of the world, no less than the design of nature and providence, that the end of speculation is practice or the improvement and regulation of our lives and actions, yet those who are most addicted to speculative studies seem as generally of another mind. And, indeed, if we consider the pains that have been taken to perplex the plainest things—that distrust of the senses, those doubts and scruples, those abstractions and refinements that occur in the very entrance of the sciences—it will not seem strange that men of leisure and curiosity should lay themselves out in fruitless disquisitions[1] without descending to the practical parts of life or informing themselves in the more necessary and important parts of knowledge.

Upon the common principles of philosophers, we are not assured of the existence of things from their being perceived. And we are taught to distinguish their real nature from that which falls under our senses. Hence arise skepticism and paradoxes. It is not enough that we see and feel, that we taste and smell a thing. Its true nature, its absolute external entity, is still concealed. For, though it is the fiction of our own brain, we have made it inaccessible to all our faculties. Sense is fallacious, reason defective. We spend our lives in doubting of those things which other men evidently know, and believing those things which they laugh at and despise.

In order, therefore, to divert the busy mind of man from vain researches, it seemed necessary to inquire into the source of its perplexities and, if possible, to lay down such principles as, by an easy solution of them, together with their own native evidence, may at once recommend

themselves for genuine to the mind and rescue it from those endless pursuits it is engaged in. This, with a plain demonstration of the immediate providence of an all-seeing God and the natural immortality of the soul, should seem the readiest preparation, as well as the strongest motive, to the study and practice of virtue.

This design I proposed in the First Part of a treatise concerning the *Principles of Human Knowledge*, published in the year 1710.[2] But, before I proceed to publish the Second Part, I thought it requisite to treat more clearly and fully of certain principles laid down in the First and to place them in a new light, which is the business of the following *Dialogues*.

In this treatise, which does not presuppose in the reader any knowledge of what was contained in the former, it has been my aim to introduce the notions I advance into the mind in the most easy and familiar manner, especially because they carry with them a great opposition to the prejudices of philosophers, which have so far prevailed against the common sense and natural notions of mankind.

If the principles which I here endeavor to propagate are admitted for true, the consequences which, I think, evidently flow from them are that atheism and skepticism will be utterly destroyed, many intricate points made plain, great difficulties solved, several useless parts of science retrenched, speculation referred to practice, and men reduced from paradoxes to common sense.

And although it may, perhaps, seem an uneasy reflection to some that when they have taken a circuit through so many refined and unvulgar[3] notions they should at last come to think like other men, yet I think this return to the simple dictates of nature, after having wandered through the wild mazes of philosophy, is not unpleasant. It is like coming home from a long voyage—a man reflects with pleasure on the many difficulties and perplexities he has passed through, sets his heart at ease, and enjoys himself with more satisfaction for the future.

As it was my intention to convince skeptics and infidels by reason, so it has been my endeavor strictly to observe the most rigid laws of reasoning. And, to an impartial reader, I hope it will be manifest that the sublime notion of a God and the comfortable expectation of immortality do naturally arise from a close and methodical application of thought—whatever may be the result of that loose, rambling way, not altogether improperly termed

free-thinking[4] by certain libertines in thought who can no more endure the restraints of logic than those of religion or government.

It will, perhaps, be objected to my design that, so far as it tends to ease the mind of difficult and useless inquiries, it can affect only a few speculative persons; but if, by their speculations rightly placed, the study of morality and the law of nature were brought more into fashion among men of parts[5] and genius, the discouragements that draw to skepticism removed, the measures of right and wrong accurately defined, and the principles of natural religion reduced into regular systems, as artfully disposed and clearly connected as those of some other sciences—there are grounds to think these effects would not only have a gradual influence in repairing the too much defaced sense of virtue in the world, but also, by showing that such parts of revelation as lie within the reach of human inquiry are most agreeable to right reason, would dispose all prudent, unprejudiced persons to a modest and wary treatment of those sacred mysteries which are above the comprehension of our faculties.

It remains that I desire the reader to withhold his censure of these *Dialogues* until he has read them through. Otherwise, he may lay them aside in a mistake of their design or on account of difficulties or objections which he would find answered in the sequel. A treatise of this nature would require to be once read over coherently in order to comprehend its design, the proofs, solution of difficulties, and the connection and disposition of its parts. If it is thought to deserve a second reading, this, I imagine, will make the entire scheme very plain—especially if recourse is had to an essay I wrote some years since upon *Vision*,[6] and the *Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*. In which various notions advanced in these *Dialogues* are further pursued or placed in different lights, and other points handled which naturally tend to confirm and illustrate them.

Endnotes

1. *disquisitions*: investigations or researches.
2. *Principles of Human Knowledge*: Berkeley's *A Treatise concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*, Part I.
3. *unvulgar*: uncommon.
4. *free-thinking*: the free exercise of reason, unrestrained by deference to authority.
5. *parts*: talents.
6. *Vision*: Berkeley's *An Essay towards a New Theory of Vision* (1709).

Notes

* This Preface was included in the 1713 and 1725 editions, but was omitted in the 1734 edition.

The First Dialogue

Philonous. Good morning, Hylas. I did not expect to find you abroad[1] so early.

Hylas. It is indeed something unusual, but my thoughts were so taken up with a subject I was discoursing of last night that, finding I could not sleep, I resolved to rise and take a turn in the garden.

Phil. It happened well, to let you see what innocent and agreeable pleasures you lose every morning. Can there be a pleasanter time of the day, or a more delightful season of the year? That purple sky, these wild but sweet notes of birds, the fragrant bloom upon the trees and flowers, the gentle influence of the rising sun—these and a thousand nameless beauties of nature inspire the soul with secret transports; its faculties, too, being at this time fresh and lively, are fit for those meditations which the solitude of a garden and tranquility of the morning naturally dispose us to. But I am afraid I interrupt your thoughts, for you seemed very intent on something.

Hyl. It is true, I was, and shall be obliged to you if you will permit me to go on in the same vein; not that I would by any means deprive myself of your company, for my thoughts always flow more easily in conversation with a friend than when I am alone; but my request is that you would suffer me to impart my reflections to you.

Phil. With all my heart, it is what I should have requested myself if you had not prevented me.

Hyl. I was considering the odd fate of those men who have in all ages, through an affectation of being distinguished from the vulgar,[2] or some unaccountable turn of thought, pretended either to believe nothing at all or to believe the most extravagant things in the world. This, however, might be

borne, if their paradoxes and skepticism did not draw after them some consequences of general disadvantage to mankind. But the mischief lies here: that when men of less leisure see them who are supposed to have spent their whole time in the pursuits of knowledge professing an entire ignorance of all things or advancing such notions as are repugnant to plain and commonly received principles, they will be tempted to entertain suspicions concerning the most important truths, which they had hitherto held sacred and unquestionable.

Phil. I entirely agree with you as to the ill tendency of the affected doubts of some philosophers and fantastical conceits of others. I am even so far gone of late in this way of thinking that I have quitted several of the sublime notions I had got in their schools for vulgar opinions. And I give it you on my word, since this revolt from metaphysical notions to the plain dictates of nature and common sense, I find my understanding strangely enlightened, so that I can now easily comprehend a great many things which before were all mystery and riddle.

Hyl. I am glad to find there was nothing in the accounts I heard of you.

Phil. Pray,[3] what were those?

Hyl. You were represented in last night's conversation as one who maintained the most extravagant opinion that ever entered into the mind of man, namely, that there is no such thing as material substance in the world.

Phil. That there is no such thing as what philosophers call "material substance," I am seriously persuaded; but if I were made to see anything absurd or skeptical in this, I should then have the same reason to renounce this, that I imagine I have now to reject the contrary opinion.

Hyl. What?! Can anything be more fantastic, more repugnant to common sense, or a more manifest piece of skepticism, than to believe there is no such thing as *matter*?

Phil. Softly, good Hylas. What if it should prove that you, who hold there is, are by virtue of that opinion a greater skeptic and maintain more paradoxes and repugnancies[4] to common sense than I who believe no such thing?

Hyl. You may as soon persuade me the part is greater than the whole, as that, in order to avoid absurdity and skepticism, I should ever be obliged to give up my opinion in this point.

Phil. Well then, are you content to admit that opinion for true which, upon examination, shall appear most agreeable to common sense and

remote from skepticism?

Hyl. With all my heart. Since you are for raising disputes about the plainest things in nature, I am content for once to hear what you have to say.

Phi. Pray, Hylas, what do you mean by a "skeptic"?

Hyl. I mean what all men mean, one that doubts of everything.

Phil. He then who entertains no doubt concerning some particular point, with regard to that point cannot be thought a skeptic.

Hyl. I agree with you.

Phil. Of which does doubting consist in, embracing the affirmative or negative side of a question?

Hyl. In neither; for whoever understands English cannot but know that "doubting" signifies a suspense[5] between both.

Phil. He then that denies any point can no more be said to doubt of it, than he who affirms it with the same degree of assurance.

Hyl. True.

Phil. And, consequently, for such his denial is no more to be esteemed a skeptic than the other.

Hyl. I acknowledge it.

Phil. How comes it to pass then,* Hylas, that you pronounce me a skeptic, because I deny what you affirm, namely, the existence of matter? Since, for all you can tell, I am as peremptory in my denial as you in your affirmation.

Hyl. Hold, Philonous, I have been a little out in my definition; but every false step a man makes in discourse is not to be insisted on. I said indeed that a "skeptic" was one who doubted of everything, but I should have added: or who denies the reality and truth of things.

Phil. What things? Do you mean the principles and theorems of sciences? But these you know are universal intellectual notions, and consequently independent of matter; the denial therefore of this does not imply denying them.

Hyl. I grant it. But are there no other things? What do you think of distrusting the senses, of denying the real existence of sensible things, or pretending to know nothing of them. Is not this sufficient to denominate a man a skeptic?

Phil. Shall we therefore examine which of us it is that denies the reality of sensible things or professes the greatest ignorance of them, since, if I take you rightly, he is to be esteemed the greatest skeptic?

Hyl. That is what I desire.

Phil. What mean you by "sensible things?"

Hyl. Those things which are perceived by the senses. Can you imagine that I mean anything else?

Phil. Pardon me, Hylas, if I am desirous clearly to apprehend your notions, since this may much shorten our inquiry. Suffer me then to ask you this further question: Are those things only perceived by the senses which are perceived immediately? Or may those things properly be said to be "sensible" which are perceived mediately, or not without the intervention of others?

Hyl. I do not sufficiently understand you.

Phil. In reading a book, what I immediately perceive are the letters, but mediately, or by means of these, are suggested to my mind* the notions of God, virtue, truth, etc. Now, that the letters are truly sensible things, or perceived by sense, there is no doubt; but I would know whether you take the things suggested by them to be so too.

Hyl. No, certainly, it would be absurd to think God or virtue sensible things, though they may be signified and suggested to the mind by sensible marks with which they have an arbitrary connection.

Phil. It seems, then, that by "sensible things" you mean those only which can be perceived immediately by sense?

Hyl. Right.

Phil. Does it not follow from this that, though I see one part of the sky red, and another blue, and that my reason does then evidently conclude there must be some cause of that diversity of colors, yet that cause cannot be said to be a sensible thing or perceived by the sense of seeing?

Hyl. It does.

Phil. In like manner, though I hear variety of sounds, yet I cannot be said to hear the causes of those sounds.

Hyl. You cannot.

Phil. And when by my touch I perceive a thing to be hot and heavy, I cannot say, with any truth or propriety, that I feel the cause of its heat or weight.

Hyl. To prevent any more questions of this kind, I tell you once for all that by "sensible things" I mean those only which are perceived by sense, and that in truth the senses perceive nothing which they do not perceive immediately, for they make no inferences. The deducing therefore of causes

or occasions from effects and appearances, which alone are perceived by sense, entirely relates to reason.

Phi. This point then is agreed between us—that *sensible things are those only which are immediately perceived by sense*. You will further inform me whether we immediately perceive by sight anything besides light, and colors, and figures; or by hearing anything but sounds; by the palate anything besides tastes; by the smell, besides odors; or by the touch, more than tangible qualities.

Hyl. We do not.

Phil. It seems, therefore, that if you take away all sensible qualities, there remains nothing sensible?

Hyl. I grant it.

Phil. Sensible things therefore are nothing else but so many sensible qualities or combinations of sensible qualities?

Hyl. Nothing else.

Phil. Heat then is a sensible thing?

Hyl. Certainly.

Phil. Does the reality of sensible things consist in being perceived? Or, is it something distinct from their being perceived, and that bears no relation to the mind?

Hyl. To *exist* is one thing, and to be *perceived* is another.

Phil. I speak with regard to sensible things only—and of these I ask, whether by their real existence you mean a subsistence exterior to the mind and distinct from their being perceived?

Hyl. I mean a real absolute being, distinct from and without any relation to their being perceived.

Phil. Heat, therefore, if it is allowed a real being, must exist without the mind?

Hyl. It must.

Phil. Tell me, Hylas, is this real existence equally compatible to all degrees of heat which we perceive, or is there any reason why we should attribute it to some and deny it to others? And if there is, pray let me know that reason.

Hyl. Whatever degree of heat we perceive by sense, we may be sure the same exists in the object that occasions it.

Phil. What?! The greatest as well as the least?

Hyl. I tell you, the reason is plainly the same in respect of both: they are both perceived by sense; no, the greater degree of heat is more sensibly perceived and, consequently, if there is any difference, we are more certain of its real existence than we can be of the reality of a lesser degree.

Phil. But is not the most vehement and intense degree of heat a very great pain?

Hyl. No one can deny it.

Phil. And is any unperceiving thing capable of pain or pleasure?

Hyl. No certainly.

Phil. Is your material substance a senseless being or a being endowed with sense and perception?

Hyl. It is senseless without doubt.

Phil. It cannot, therefore, be the subject of pain?

Hyl. By no means.

Phil. Nor consequently of the greatest heat perceived by sense, since you acknowledge this to be no small pain.

Hyl. I grant it.

Phil. What shall we say then of your external object—is it a material substance or not?

Hyl. It is a material substance with the sensible qualities inhering in it.

Phil. How then can a great heat exist in it, since you own[6] it cannot in a material substance? I desire you would clear this point.

Hyl. Hold, Philonous, I fear I was out in yielding intense heat to be a pain. It should seem rather that pain is something distinct from heat, and the consequence or effect of it.

Phil. Upon putting your hand near the fire, do you perceive one simple uniform sensation or two distinct sensations?

Hyl. But one simple sensation.

Phil. Is not the heat immediately perceived?

Hyl. It is.

Phil. And the pain?

Hyl. True.

Phil. Seeing therefore they are both immediately perceived at the same time, and the fire affects you only with one simple or uncom-pounded idea, it follows that this same simple idea is both the intense heat immediately perceived and the pain; and, consequently, that the intense heat immediately perceived is nothing distinct from a particular sort of pain.

Hyl. It seems so.

Phil. Again, try in your thoughts, Hylas, if you can conceive a vehement sensation to be without pain or pleasure.

Hyl. I cannot.

Phil. Or can you frame to yourself an idea of sensible pain or pleasure in general, abstracted from every particular idea of heat, cold, tastes, smells, etc.?

Hyl. I do not find that I can.

Phi. Does it not therefore follow that sensible pain is nothing distinct from those sensations or ideas, in an intense degree?

Hyl. It is undeniable; and, to speak the truth, I begin to suspect a very great heat cannot exist but in a mind perceiving it.

Phil. What?! Are you then in that *skeptical* state of suspense, between affirming and denying?

Hyl. I think I may be positive in the point. A very violent and painful heat cannot exist without the mind.

Phil. It has not therefore, according to you, any real being?

Hyl. I own it.

Phil. Is it therefore certain that there is no body in nature really hot?

Hyl. I have not denied there is any real heat in bodies. I only say there is no such thing as an intense real heat.

Phil. But did you not say before that all degrees of heat were equally real —or, if there was any difference, that the greater would be more undoubtedly real than the lesser?

Hyl. True; but it was because I did not then consider the ground there is for distinguishing between them, which I now plainly see. And it is this: because intense heat is nothing else but a particular kind of painful sensation, and pain cannot exist but in a perceiving being, it follows that no intense heat can really exist in an unperceiving corporeal substance. But this is no reason why we should deny heat in an inferior degree to exist in such a substance.

Phil. But how shall we be able to discern those degrees of heat which exist only in the mind from those which exist without it?

Hyl. That is no difficult matter. You know the least pain cannot exist unperceived; whatever, therefore, degree of heat is a pain, exists only in the mind. But as for all other degrees of heat nothing obliges us to think the same of them.

Phil. I think you granted before that no unperceiving being was capable of pleasure any more than of pain.

Hyl. I did.

Phil. And is not warmth, or a more gentle degree of heat than what causes uneasiness, a pleasure?

Hyl. What then?

Phil. Consequently it cannot exist without the mind in an unperceiv-ing substance or body.

Hyl. So it seems.

Phil. Since, therefore, as well those degrees of heat that are not painful, as those that are, can exist only in a thinking substance, may we not conclude that external bodies are absolutely incapable of any degree of heat whatsoever?

Hyl. On second thought, I do not think it so evident that warmth is a pleasure as that a great degree of heat is a pain.

Phil. I do not pretend that warmth is as great a pleasure as heat is a pain. But if you grant it to be even a small pleasure, it serves to make good my conclusion.

Hyl. I could rather call it an "indolence." It seems to be nothing more than a privation of both pain and pleasure. And that such a quality or state as this may agree to an unthinking substance, I hope you will not deny.

Phil. If you are resolved to maintain that warmth, or a gentle degree of heat, is no pleasure, I know not how to convince you otherwise than by appealing to your own sense. But what do you think of cold?

Hyl. The same that I do of heat. An intense degree of cold is a pain, for to feel a very great cold is to perceive a great uneasiness; it cannot, therefore, exist without the mind, but a lesser degree of cold may, as well as a lesser degree of heat.

Phil. Those bodies, therefore, upon whose application to our own we perceive a moderate degree of heat, must be concluded to have a moderate degree of heat or warmth in them; and those, upon whose application we feel a like degree of cold, must be thought to have cold in them.

Hyl. They must.

Phil. Can any doctrine be true that necessarily leads a man into an absurdity?

Hyl. Without doubt it cannot.

Phil. Is it not an absurdity to think that the same thing should be at the same time both cold and warm?

Hyl. It is.

Phil. Suppose now one of your hands hot, and the other cold, and that they are both at once put into the same vessel of water in an intermediate state; will not the water seem cold to one hand, and warm to the other?

Hyl. It will.

Phil. Ought we not therefore, by your principles, to conclude it is really both cold and warm at the same time—that is, according to your own concession, to believe an absurdity?

Hyl. I confess it seems so.

Phil. Consequently, the principles themselves are false, since you have granted that no true principle leads to an absurdity.

Hyl. But, after all, can anything be more absurd than to say *there is no heat in the fire*?

Phil. To make the point still clearer; tell me whether, in two cases exactly alike, we ought not to make the same judgment?

Hyl. We ought.

Phil. When a pin pricks your finger, does it not rend and divide the fibers of your flesh?

Hyl. It does.

Phil. And when a coal burns your finger, does it do any more?

Hyl. It does not.

Phil. Since, therefore, you neither judge the sensation itself occasioned by the pin, nor anything like it, to be in the pin, you should not, conformably to what you have now granted, judge the sensation occasioned by the fire, or anything like it, to be in the fire.

Hyl. Well, since it must be so, I am content to yield this point and acknowledge that heat and cold are only sensations existing in our minds. But there still remain qualities enough to secure the reality of external things.

Phil. But what will you say, Hylas, if it shall appear that the case is the same with regard to all other sensible qualities, and that they can no more be supposed to exist without the mind than heat and cold?

Hyl. Then, indeed, you will have done something to the purpose; but that is what I despair of seeing proved.

Phil. Let us examine them in order. What do you think of tastes—do they exist without the mind or not?

Hyl. Can any man in his senses doubt whether sugar is sweet or wormwood[7] bitter?

Phil. Inform me, Hylas. Is a sweet taste a particular kind of pleasure or pleasant sensation, or is it not?

Hyl. It is.

Phil. And is not bitterness some kind of uneasiness or pain?

Hyl. I grant it.

Phil. If, therefore, sugar and wormwood are unthinking corporeal substances existing without the mind, how can sweetness and bitterness, that is, pleasure and pain, agree to them?

Hyl. Hold on, Philonous, I now see what it was that deluded me all this time. You asked whether heat and cold, sweetness and bitterness, were not particular sorts of pleasure and pain—to which I answered simply that they were. Whereas I should have thus distinguished: Those qualities, as perceived by us, are pleasures or pains, but not as existing in the external objects. We must not therefore conclude absolutely that there is no heat in the fire or sweetness in the sugar, but only that heat or sweetness, as perceived by us, are not in the fire or sugar. What do you say to this?

Phil. I say it is nothing to the purpose. Our discourse proceeded altogether concerning sensible things, which you defined to be the things we "immediately perceive by our senses." Whatever other qualities, therefore, you speak of, as distinct from these, I know nothing of them, neither do they at all belong to the point in dispute. You may, indeed, pretend to have discovered certain qualities which you do not perceive and assert those insensible qualities exist in fire and sugar. But what use can be made of this to your present purpose, I am at a loss to conceive. Tell me then once more, do you acknowledge that heat and cold, sweetness and bitterness—meaning those qualities which are perceived by the senses—do not exist without the mind?

Hyl. I see it is to no purpose to hold out, so I give up the cause as to those mentioned qualities. Though I profess it sounds odd to say that sugar is not sweet.

Phil. But, for your further satisfaction, take this along with you: That which at other times seems sweet shall, to a distempered palate, appear bitter. And nothing can be plainer than that different persons perceive

different tastes in the same food, since that which one man delights in, another abhors. And how could this be, if the taste was something really inherent in the food?

Hyl. I acknowledge I do not know how.

Phil. In the next place, odors are to be considered. And with regard to these, I would fain[8] know whether what has been said of tastes does not exactly agree to them? Are they not so many pleasing or displeasing sensations?

Hyl. They are.

Phil. Can you then conceive it possible that they should exist in an unperceiving thing?

Hyl. I cannot.

Phil. Or can you imagine that filth and ordure[9] affect those brute animals that feed on them out of choice with the same smells which we perceive in them?

Hyl. By no means.

Phil. May we not therefore conclude of smells, as of the other aforementioned qualities, that they cannot exist in any but a perceiving substance or mind?

Hyl. I think so.

Phil. Then as to sounds, what must we think of them—are they accidents really inherent in external bodies or not?

Hyl. That they inhere not in the sonorous bodies is plain from this: because a bell struck in the exhausted receiver of an air-pump sends forth no sound. The air, therefore, must be thought the subject of sound.

Phil. What reason is there for that, Hylas?

Hyl. Because, when any motion is raised in the air, we perceive a sound greater or lesser in proportion to the air's motion; but without some motion in the air we never hear any sound at all.

Phil. And granting that we never hear a sound but when some motion is produced in the air, yet I do not see how you can infer from this that the sound itself is in the air.

Hyl. It is this very motion in the external air that produces in the mind the sensation of sound. For, striking on the drum of the ear, it causes a vibration, which, by the auditory nerves being communicated to the brain, the soul is thereupon affected with the sensation called sound.

Phil. What?! Is sound then a sensation?

Hyl. I tell you, as perceived by us, it is a particular sensation in the mind.

Phil. And can any sensation exist without the mind?

Hyl. No, certainly.

Phil. How then can sound, being a sensation, exist in the air, if by the "air" you mean a senseless substance existing without the mind?

Hyl. You must distinguish, Philonous, between sound as it is perceived by us and as it is in itself; or—which is the same thing—between the sound we immediately perceive and that which exists without us. The former, indeed, is a particular kind of sensation, but the latter is merely a vibrating or undulating motion in the air.

Phil. I thought I had already obviated that distinction by the answer I gave when you were applying it in a like case before. But, to say no more of that, are you sure then that sound is really nothing but motion?

Hyl. I am.

Phil. Whatever, therefore, agrees to real sound may with truth be attributed to motion?

Hyl. It may.

Phil. It is then good sense to speak of "motion" as of a thing that is *loud*, *sweet*, *acute*, or *grave*.

Hyl. I see you are resolved not to understand me. Is it not evident those accidents or modes belong only to sensible sound, or sound in the common acceptation[10] of the word, but not to sound in the real and philosophic sense, which, as I just now told you, is nothing but a certain motion of the air?

Phil. It seems then there are two sorts of sound—the one vulgar, or that which is heard, the other philosophical and real?

Hyl. Even so.

Phil. And the latter consists in motion?

Hyl. I told you so before.

Phil. Tell me, Hylas, to which of the senses do you think the idea of motion belongs—to the hearing?

Hyl. No, certainly, but to the sight and touch.

Phil. It should follow then that, according to you, real sounds may possibly be *seen* or *felt*, but never *heard*.

Hyl. Look you, Philonous, you may, if you please, make a jest of my opinion, but that will not alter the truth of things. I own, indeed, the inferences you draw me into sound something oddly; but common language, you know, is framed by, and for the use of, the vulgar. We must

not therefore wonder if expressions adapted to exact philosophic notions seem uncouth and out of the way.

Phil. Is it come to that? I assure you I imagine myself to have gained no small point, since you make so light of departing from common phrases and opinions, it being a main part of our inquiry to examine whose notions are widest of the common road and most repugnant to the general sense of the world. But can you think it no more than a philosophical paradox, to say that *real sounds are never heard* and that the idea of them is obtained by some other sense? And is there nothing in this contrary to nature and the truth of things?

Hyl. To deal ingenuously, I do not like it. And, after the concessions already made, I had as well grant* that sounds too have no real being without the mind.

Phil. And I hope you will make no difficulty to acknowledge the same of colors.

Hyl. Pardon me; the case of colors is very different. Can anything be plainer than that we see them on the objects?

Phil. The objects you speak of are, I suppose, corporeal substances existing without the mind?

Hyl. They are.

Phil. And have true and real colors inhering in them?

Hyl. Each visible object has that color which we see in it.

Phil. How?! Is there anything visible but what we perceive by sight?

Hyl. There is not.

Phil. And do we perceive anything by sense which we do not perceive immediately?

Hyl. How often must I be obliged to repeat the same thing? I tell you, we do not.

Phil. Have patience, good Hylas, and tell me once more whether there is anything immediately perceived by the senses except sensible qualities. I know you asserted there was not; but I would now be informed whether you still persist in the same opinion.

Hyl. I do.

Phil. Pray, is your corporeal substance either a sensible quality or made up of sensible qualities?

Hyl. What a question that is! Who ever thought it was?

Phil. My reason for asking was, because in saying "each visible object has that color which we see in it," you make visible objects to be corporeal substances, which implies either that corporeal substances are sensible qualities or else that there is something besides sensible qualities perceived by sight; but as this point was formerly agreed between us, and is still maintained by you, it is a clear conse-quence that your corporeal substance is nothing distinct from sensible qualities.

Hyl. You may draw as many absurd consequences as you please and endeavor to perplex the plainest things, but you shall never persuade me out of my senses. I clearly understand my own meaning.

Phil. I wish you would make me understand it, too. But since you are unwilling to have your notion of corporeal substance examined, I shall urge that point no further. Only be pleased to let me know whether the same colors which we see exist in external bodies or some other.

Hyl. The very same.

Phil. What?! Are then the beautiful red and purple we see on yonder clouds really in them? Or do you imagine they have in themselves any other form than that of a dark mist or vapor?

Hyl. I must own, Philonous, those colors are not really in the clouds as they seem to be at this distance. They are only apparent colors.

Phil. "Apparent" you call them? How shall we distinguish these apparent colors from real?

Hyl. Very easily. Those are to be thought apparent which, appearing only at a distance, vanish upon a nearer approach.

Phil. And those, I suppose, are to be thought real which are discovered by the most near and exact survey.

Hyl. Right.

Phil. Is the nearest and exactest survey made by the help* of a microscope or by the naked eye?

Hyl. By a microscope, doubtless.

Phil. But a microscope often discovers colors in an object different from those perceived by the unassisted sight. And, in case we had microscopes magnifying to any assigned degree, it is certain that no object whatsoever, viewed through them, would appear in the same color which it exhibits to the naked eye.

Hyl. And what will you conclude from all this? You cannot argue that there are really and naturally no colors on objects because by artificial

managements they may be altered or made to vanish.

Phil. I think it may evidently be concluded from your own concessions that all the colors we see with our naked eyes are only apparent as those on the clouds, since they vanish upon a more close and accurate inspection which is afforded us by a microscope. Then, as to what you say by way of prevention: I ask you whether the real and natural state of an object is better discovered by a very sharp and piercing sight or by one which is less sharp?

Hyl. By the former without doubt.

Phil. Is it not plain from dioptrics[11] that microscopes make the sight more penetrating and represent objects as they would appear to the eye in case it were naturally endowed with a most exquisite sharpness?

Hyl. It is.

Phil. Consequently, the microscopic representation is to be thought that which best sets forth the real nature of the thing, or what it is in itself. The colors, therefore, perceived by it are more genuine and real than those perceived otherwise.

Hyl. I confess there is something in what you say.

Phil. Besides, it is not only possible but manifest that there actually are animals whose eyes are by nature framed to perceive those things which by reason of their minuteness escape our sight. What do you think of those inconceivably small animals perceived by glasses? Must we suppose they are all stark blind? Or, in case they see, can it be imagined their sight has not the same use in preserving their bodies from injuries which appears in that of all other animals? And if it has, is it not evident they must see particles less than their own bodies, which will present them with a far different view in each object from that which strikes our senses? Even our own eyes do not always represent objects to us after the same manner. In the case of jaundice, everyone knows that all things seem yellow. Is it not therefore highly probable that those animals in whose eyes we discern a very different texture from that of ours, and whose bodies abound with different humors, do not see the same colors in every object that we do? From all this should it not seem to follow that all colors are equally apparent, and that none of those which we perceive are really inherent in any outward object?

Hyl. It should.

Phil. The point will be past all doubt if you consider that, in case colors were real properties or affections inherent in external bodies, they could

admit of no alteration without some change wrought in the very bodies themselves. But is it not evident from what has been said that, upon the use of microscopes, upon a change happening in the humors of the eye, or a variation of distance, without any manner of real alteration in the thing itself, the colors of any object are either changed or totally disappear? No, all other circumstances remaining the same, change but the situation of some objects and they shall present different colors to the eye. The same thing happens upon viewing an object in various degrees of light. And what is more known than that the same bodies appear differently colored by candlelight from what they do in the open day? Add to these the experiment of a prism which, separating the heterogeneous rays of light, alters the color of any object and will cause the whitest to appear of a deep blue or red to the naked eye. And now tell me whether you are still of the opinion that every body has its true real color inhering in it; and if you think it has, I would fain know further from you what certain distance and position of the object, what peculiar texture and formation of the eye, what degree or kind of light is necessary for ascertaining that true color and distinguishing it from apparent ones.

Hyl. I own myself entirely satisfied that they are all equally apparent and that there is no such thing as color really inhering in external bodies, but that it is altogether in the light. And what confirms me in this opinion is that in proportion to the light, colors are still more or less vivid; and if there is no light, then there are no colors perceived. Besides, allowing there are colors on external objects, yet, how is it possible for us to perceive them? For no external body affects the mind unless it act first on our organs of sense. But the only action of bodies is motion, and motion cannot be communicated otherwise than by impulse. A distant object, therefore, cannot act on the eye, nor consequently make itself or its properties perceivable to the soul. From this it plainly follows that it is immediately some contiguous substance which, operating on the eye, occasions a perception of colors—and such is light.

Phil. How? Is light then a substance?

Hyl. I tell you, Philonous, external light is nothing but a thin fluid substance whose minute particles, being agitated with a brisk motion and in various manners reflected from the different surfaces of outward objects to the eyes, communicate different motions to the optic nerves, which, being

propagated to the brain, cause therein various impressions—and these are attended with the sensations of red, blue, yellow, etc.

Phil. It seems, then, the light does no more than shake the optic nerves.

Hyl. Nothing else.

Phil. And consequent to each particular motion of the nerves the mind is affected with a sensation, which is some particular color.

Hyl. Right.

Phil. And these sensations have no existence without the mind.

Hyl. They have not.

Phil. How then do you affirm that colors are in the light, since by "light" you understand a corporeal substance external to the mind?

Hyl. Light and colors, as immediately perceived by us, I grant cannot exist without the mind. But in themselves they are only* the motions and configurations of certain insensible particles of matter.

Phil. Colors, then, in the vulgar sense, or taken for the immediate objects of sight, cannot agree to any but a perceiving substance.

Hyl. That is what I say.

Phil. Well then, since you give up the point as to those sensible qualities which are alone thought colors by all mankind besides, you may hold what you please with regard to those invisible ones of the philosophers. It is not my business to dispute about them; only I would advise you to bethink yourself† whether, considering the inquiry we are upon, it is prudent for you to affirm: *the red and blue which we see are not real colors, but certain unknown motions and figures which no man ever did or can see are truly so*. Are not these shocking notions, and are not they subject to as many ridiculous inferences as those you were obliged to renounce before* in the case of sounds?

Hyl. I frankly own, Philonous, that it is in vain to stand out any longer. Colors, sounds, tastes, in a word, all those termed "secondary qualities," have certainly no existence without the mind. But by this acknowledgment I must not be supposed to derogate anything from the reality of matter or external objects, seeing it is no more than several philosophers maintain who nevertheless are the furthest imaginable from denying matter. For the clearer understanding of this you must know sensible qualities are by philosophers divided into *primary* and *secondary*.[12] The former are extension, figure, solidity, gravity, motion, and rest. And these they hold exist really in bodies. The latter are those above enumerated, or, briefly, all

sensible qualities besides the primary, which they assert are only so many sensations or ideas existing nowhere but in the mind. But all this, I doubt not, you are already apprised of. For my part, I have been a long time sensible there was such an opinion current among philosophers, but was never thoroughly convinced of its truth until now.

Phil. You are still then of the opinion that extension and figures are inherent in external unthinking substances?

Hyl. I am.

Phil. But what if the same arguments which are brought against secondary qualities will hold good against these also?

Hyl. Why then I shall be obliged to think they too exist only in the mind.

Phil. Is it your opinion the very figure and extension which you perceive by sense exist in the outward object or material substance?

Hyl. It is.

Phil. Have all other animals as good grounds to think the same of the figure and extension which they see and feel?

Hyl. Without doubt, if they have any thought at all.

Phil. Answer me, Hylas. Do you think the senses were bestowed upon all animals for their preservation and wellbeing in life? Or were they given to men alone for this end?

Hyl. I make no question but they have the same use in all other animals.

Phil. If so, is it not necessary they should be enabled by them to perceive their own limbs and those bodies which are capable of harming them?

Hyl. Certainly.

Phil. A mite therefore must be supposed to see his own foot, and things equal or even less than it, as bodies of some considerable dimension, though at the same time they appear to you scarce discernible or at best as so many visible points?

Hyl. I cannot deny it.

Phil. And to creatures less than the mite they will seem yet larger?

Hyl. They will.

Phil. To the extent that what you can hardly discern will to another extremely minute animal appear as some huge mountain?

Hyl. All this I grant.

Phil. Can one and the same thing be at the same time in itself of different dimensions?

Hyl. That would be absurd to imagine.

Phil. But from what you have laid down it follows, that both the extension perceived by you, and that perceived by the mite itself, as likewise all those perceived by lesser animals, are each of them the true extension of the mite's foot—that is to say, by your own principles you are led into an absurdity.

Hyl. There seems to be some difficulty in the point.

Phil. Again, have you not acknowledged that no real inherent property of any object can be changed, without some change in the thing itself?

Hyl. I have.

Phil. But, as we approach to or recede from an object, the visible extension varies, being at one distance ten or an hundred times greater than at another. Does it not therefore follow from this, likewise, that it is not really inherent in the object?

Hyl. I own I am at a loss what to think.

Phil. Your judgment will soon be determined if you will venture to think as freely concerning* this quality as you have done concerning† the rest. Was it not admitted as a good argument that neither heat nor cold was in the water because it seemed warm to one hand and cold to the other?

Hyl. It was.

Phil. Is it not the very same reasoning to conclude there is no extension or figure in an object because to one eye it shall seem little, smooth, and round, when at the same time it appears to the other, great, uneven, and angular?

Hyl. The very same. But does this latter fact ever happen?

Phil. You may at any time make the experiment by looking with one eye bare, and with the other through a microscope.

Hyl. I know not how to maintain it, and yet I am loath to give up *extension*; I see so many odd consequences following upon such a concession.

Phil. Odd, you say? After the concessions already made, I hope you will stick at nothing for its oddness. [But, on the other hand, should it not seem very odd if the general reasoning which includes all other sensible qualities did not also include extension? If it is allowed that no idea nor anything like an idea can exist in an unperceiving substance, then surely it follows that no figure or mode of extension, which we can either perceive or imagine or have any idea of, can be really inherent in matter—not to mention the peculiar difficult there must be in conceiving a material substance, prior to

and distinct from extension, to be the *substratum* of extension. Whatever the sensible quality may be—figure, or sound, or color—it seems alike impossible it should subsist in that which does not perceive it.]*

Hyl. I give up the point for the present, reserving still a right to retract my opinion in case I shall hereafter discover any false step in my progress to it.

Phil. That is a right you cannot be denied. Figures and extension being dispatched, we proceed next to motion. Can a real motion in any external body be at the same time very swift and very slow?

Hyl. It cannot.

Phil. Is not the motion of a body swift in a reciprocal proportion to the time it takes up in describing[13] any given space? Thus a body that describes a mile in an hour moves three times faster than it would in case it described only a mile in three hours.

Hyl. I agree with you.

Phil. And is not time measured by the succession of ideas in our minds?

Hyl. It is.

Phil. And is it not possible ideas should succeed one another twice as fast in your mind as they do in mine, or in that of some spirit of another kind?

Hyl. I own it.

Phil. Consequently, the same body may to another seem to perform its motion over any space in half the time that it does to you. And the same reasoning will hold as to any other proportion—that is to say, according to your principles, since the motions perceived are both really in the object, it is possible one and the same body shall be really moved the same way at once, both very swift and very slow. How is this consistent either with common sense or with what you just now granted?

Hyl. I have nothing to say to it.

Phil. Then as for solidity; either you do not mean any sensible quality by that word, and so it is beside our inquiry, or, if you do, it must be either hardness or resistance. But both the one and the other are plainly relative to our senses—it being evident that what seems hard to one animal may appear soft to another who has greater force and firmness of limbs. Nor is it less plain that the resistance I feel is not in the body.

Hyl. I own the very sensation of resistance, which is all you immediately perceive, is not in the body, but the cause of that sensation is.

Phil. But the causes of our sensations are not things immediately perceived, and therefore are not sensible. This point I thought had been

already determined.

Hyl. I own it was; but you will pardon me if I seem a little embarrassed. I do not know how to quit my old notions.

Phil. To help you out, do but consider that if extension is once acknowledged to have no existence without the mind, the same must necessarily be granted of motion, solidity, and gravity, since they all evidently suppose extension. It is therefore superfluous to inquire particularly concerning each of them. In denying extension, you have denied them all to have any real existence.

Hyl. I wonder, Philonous, if what you say is true, why those philosophers who deny the secondary qualities any real existence should yet attribute it to the primary. If there is no difference between them, how can this be accounted for?

Phil. It is not my business to account for every opinion of the philosophers. But, among other reasons which may be assigned for this, it seems probable that pleasure and pain being annexed to the former rather than the latter may be one. Heat and cold, tastes and smells have something more vividly pleasing or disagreeable than the ideas of extension, figure, and motion affect us with. And, it being too visibly absurd to hold that pain or pleasure can be in an unperceiving substance, men are more easily weaned from believing the external existence of the secondary than the primary qualities. You will be satisfied there is something in this if you recollect the difference you made between an intense and more moderate degree of heat, allowing the one a real existence while you denied it to the other. But, after all, there is no rational ground for that distinction, for surely an indifferent sensation is as truly a *sensation* as one more pleasing or painful, and consequently should not any more than they be supposed to exist in an unthinking subject.

Hyl. It is just come into my head, Philonous, that I have somewhere heard of a distinction between absolute and sensible extension. Now though it is acknowledged that *great* and *small*, consisting merely in the relation which other extended beings have to the parts of our own bodies, do not really inhere in the substances themselves, yet nothing obliges us to hold the same with regard to *absolute extension*, which is something abstracted from *great* and *small*, from this or that particular magnitude or figure. So likewise as to motion—*swift* and *slow* are altogether relative to the succession of ideas in our own minds. But it does not follow, because those

modifications of motion do not exist without the mind, that therefore absolute motion abstracted from them does not.

Phil. Pray what is it that distinguishes one motion, or one part* of extension, from another? Is it not something sensible, as some degree of swiftness or slowness, some certain magnitude or figure peculiar to each?

Hyl. I think so.

Phil. These qualities, therefore, stripped of all sensible properties, are without all specific and numerical differences, as the Schools[14] call them.

Hyl. They are.

Phil. That is to say, they are extension in general, and motion in general.

Hyl. Let it be so.

Phil. But it is a universally received maxim that *everything which exists is particular*.[15] How then can motion in general, or extension in general, exist in any corporeal substance?

Hyl. I will take time to solve your difficulty.

Phil. But I think the point may be speedily decided. Without doubt you can tell whether you are able to frame this or that idea. Now I am content to put our dispute on this issue. If you can frame in your thoughts a distinct abstract idea of motion or extension divested of all those sensible modes as swift and slow, great and small, round and square, and the like, which are acknowledged to exist only in the mind, I will then yield the point you contend for. But if you cannot, it will be unreasonable on your side to insist any longer upon what you have no notion of.

Hyl. To confess ingenuously, I cannot.

Phil. Can you even separate the ideas of extension and motion from the ideas of all those* qualities which they who make the distinction term "secondary"?

Hyl. What?! Is it not an easy matter to consider extension and motion by themselves, abstracted from all other sensible qualities? Pray how do the mathematicians treat of them?

Phil. I acknowledge, Hylas, it is not difficult to form general propositions and reasonings about those qualities without mentioning any other, and, in this sense, to consider or treat of them abstractedly. But how does it follow that because I can pronounce the word "motion" by itself, I can form the idea of it in my mind exclusive of body? Or because theorems may be made of extension and figures, without any mention of *great* or *small*, or any other sensible mode or quality, that therefore it is possible such an abstract

idea of extension, without any particular size or figure or sensible quality,† should be distinctly formed and apprehended by the mind? Mathematicians treat of quantity without regarding what other sensible qualities it is attended with, as being altogether indifferent to their demonstrations. But when, laying aside the words, they contemplate the bare ideas, I believe you will find they are not the pure abstracted ideas of extension.

Hyl. But what do you say to *pure intellect*? May not abstracted ideas be framed by that faculty?

Phil. Since I cannot frame abstract ideas at all,[16] it is plain I cannot frame them by the help of "pure intellect," whatever faculty you under stand by those words. Besides—not to inquire into the nature of pure intellect and its spiritual objects, as *virtue, reason, God*, or the like—this much seems manifest, that sensible things are only to be perceived by sense or represented by the imagination. Figures, therefore, and extension, being originally perceived by sense, do not belong to pure intellect. But, for your further satisfaction, try if you can to frame the idea of any figure abstracted from all particularities of size, or even from other sensible qualities.

Hyl. Let me think a little—I do not find that I can.

Phil. And can you think it possible that should really exist in nature which implies a repugnancy in its conception?

Hyl. By no means.

Phil. Since therefore it is impossible even for the mind to disunite the ideas of extension and motion from all other sensible qualities, does it not follow that where the one exists there necessarily the other exists likewise?

Hyl. It should seem so.

Phil. Consequently, the very same arguments which you admitted as conclusive against the secondary qualities are without any further application of force against the primary, too. Besides, if you will trust your senses, is it not plain all sensible qualities coexist, or to them appear as being in the same place? Do they ever represent a motion or figure as being divested of all other visible and tangible qualities?

Hyl. You need say no more on this head. I am free to own, if there is no secret error or oversight in our proceedings so far, that all sensible qualities are alike to be denied existence without the mind. But my fear is that I have been too liberal in my former concessions, or overlooked some fallacy or other. In short, I did not take time to think.

Phil. For that matter, Hylas, you may take what time you please in reviewing the progress of our inquiry. You are at liberty to recover any slips you might have made, or offer whatever you have omitted which makes for your first opinion.

Hyl. One great oversight I take to be this: that I did not sufficiently distinguish the *object* from the *sensation*. Now though this latter may not exist without the mind, yet it will not follow from this that the former cannot.

Phil. What object do you mean? The object of the senses?

Hyl. The same.

Phil. It is then immediately perceived.

Hyl. Right.

Phil. Make me to understand the difference between what is immediately perceived and a sensation.

Hyl. The sensation I take to be an act of the mind perceiving; besides which there is something perceived, and this I call the "object." For example, there is red and yellow on that tulip. But then the act of perceiving those colors is in me only, and not in the tulip.

Phil. What tulip do you speak of? Is it that which you see?

Hyl. The same.

Phil. And what do you see besides color, figure, and extension?

Hyl. Nothing.

Phil. What you would say then is that the red and yellow are coexistent with the extension—is it not?

Hyl. That is not all. I would say they have a real existence without the mind in some unthinking substance.

Phil. That the colors are really in the tulip which I see is manifest. Neither can it be denied that this tulip may exist independent of your mind or mine; but that any immediate object of the senses—that is, any idea, or combination of ideas—should exist in an unthinking substance, or exterior to all minds, is in itself an evident contradiction. Nor can I imagine how this follows from what you said just now, namely, that the red and yellow were on the tulip *you saw*, since you do not pretend to *see* that unthinking substance.

Hyl. You have an artful way, Philonous, of diverting our inquiry from the subject.

Phil. I see you have no mind to be pressed that way. To return then to your distinction between *sensation* and *object*; if I take you right, you distinguish in every perception two things, the one an action of the mind, the other not.

Hyl. True.

Phil. And this action cannot exist in, or belong to, any unthinking thing, but whatever besides is implied in a perception may?

Hyl. That is my meaning.

Phil. So that if there was a perception without any act of the mind, it would be possible such a perception should exist in an unthinking substance?

Hyl. I grant it. But it is impossible there should be such a perception.

Phil. When is the mind said to be active?

Hyl. When it produces, puts an end to, or changes anything.

Phil. Can the mind produce, discontinue, or change anything but by an act of the will?

Hyl. It cannot.

Phil. The mind therefore is to be accounted active in its perceptions insofar as volition is included in them?

Hyl. It is.

Phil. In plucking this flower I am active, because I do it by the motion of my hand, which was consequent upon my volition; so likewise in applying it to my nose. But is either of these smelling?

Hyl. No.

Phil. I act, too, in drawing the air through my nose, because my breathing so rather than otherwise is the effect of my volition. But neither can this be called "smelling," for if it were, I should smell every time I breathed in that manner.

Hyl. True.

Phil. Smelling then is somewhat consequent to all this?

Hyl. It is.

Phil. But I do not find my will concerned any further. Whatever more there is—as that I perceive such a particular smell or any smell at all this is independent of my will, and in that I am altogether passive. Do you find it otherwise with you, Hylas?

Hyl. No, the very same.

Phil. Then, as to seeing, is it not in your power to open your eyes or keep them shut, to turn them this or that way?

Hyl. Without doubt.

Phil. But does it in like manner depend on your will that in looking on this flower you perceive *white* rather than any other color? Or directing your open eyes towards yonder part of the heaven, can you avoid seeing the sun? Or is light or darkness the effect of your volition?

Hyl. No, certainly.

Phil. You are then in these respects altogether passive?

Hyl. I am.

Phil. Tell me now whether *seeing* consists in perceiving light and colors or in opening and turning the eyes?

Hyl. Without doubt, in the former.

Phil. Since, therefore, you are in the very perception of light and colors altogether passive, what is become of that action you were speaking of as an ingredient in every sensation? And does it not follow from your own concessions that the perception of light and colors, including no action in it, may exist in an unperceiving substance? And is not this a plain contradiction?

Hyl. I do not know what to think of it.

Phil. Besides, since you distinguish the *active* and *passive* in every perception, you must do it in that of pain. But how is it possible that pain, be it as little active as you please, should exist in an unperceiving substance? In short, do but consider the point and then confess ingenuously whether light and colors, tastes, sounds, etc. are not all equally passions or sensations in the soul. You may indeed call them "external objects" and give them in words what subsistence you please. But examine your own thoughts and then tell me whether it is not as I say?

Hyl. I acknowledge, Philonous, that, upon a fair observation of what passes in my mind, I can discover nothing else but that I am a thinking being, affected with variety of sensations; neither is it possible to conceive how a sensation should exist in an unperceiving substance. But then, on the other hand, when I look on sensible things in a different view, considering them as so many modes and qualities, I find it necessary to suppose a material *substratum*, without which they cannot be conceived to exist.[17]

Phil. "Material substratum" you call it? Pray, by which of your senses did you become acquainted with that being?

Hyl. It is not itself sensible; its modes and qualities only being perceived by the senses.

Phil. I presume then it was by reflection and reason that you obtained the idea of it.

Hyl. I do not pretend to any proper positive idea of it. However, I conclude it exists because qualities cannot be conceived to exist without a support.

Phil. It seems then you have only a relative notion of it, or that you conceive it not otherwise than by conceiving the relation it bears to sensible qualities.

Hyl. Right.

Phil. Be pleased, therefore, to let me know in what that relation consists.

Hyl. Is it not sufficiently expressed in the term "substratum" or "substance"?

Phil. If so, the word "substratum" should import that it is spread under the sensible qualities or accidents?

Hyl. True.

Phil. And consequently under extension?

Hyl. I own it.

Phil. It is therefore somewhat in its own nature entirely distinct from extension?

Hyl. I tell you extension is only a mode, and matter is something that supports modes. And is it not evident the thing supported is different from the thing supporting?

Phil. So that something distinct from, and exclusive of, extension is supposed to be the *substratum* of extension?

Hyl. Just so.

Phil. Answer me, Hylas. Can a thing be spread without extension? Or is not the idea of extension necessarily included in *spreading?*

Hyl. It is.

Phil. Whatever therefore you suppose spread under anything must have in itself an extension distinct from the extension of that thing under which it is spread?

Hyl. It must.

Phil. Consequently, every corporeal substance being the *substratum* of extension must have in itself another extension by which it is qualified to be a *substratum*—and so on to infinity. And I ask whether this is not absurd in

itself and repugnant to what you granted just now, namely, that the *substratum* was something distinct from and exclusive of extension?

Hyl. Yes, but, Philonous, you take me wrong. I do not mean that matter is *spread* in a gross literal sense under extension. The word "substratum" is used only to express in general the same thing with "substance."

Phil. Well then, let us examine the relation implied in the term "substance." Is it not that it stands under accidents?

Hyl. The very same.

Phil. But that one thing may stand under or support another, must it not be extended?

Hyl. It must.

Phil. Is not therefore this supposition liable to the same absurdity with the former?

Hyl. You still take things in a strict literal sense—that is not fair, Philonous.

Phil. I am not for imposing any sense on your words. You are at liberty to explain them as you please. Only, I beseech you, make me understand something by them. You tell me, matter supports or stands under accidents. How! Is it as your legs support your body?

Hyl. No; that is the literal sense.

Phil. Pray let me know any sense, literal or not literal, that you understand it in.—How long must I wait for an answer, Hylas?

Hyl. I declare I know not what to say. I once thought I understood well enough what was meant by matter's supporting accidents. But now, the more I think on it, the less can I comprehend it; in short, I find that I know nothing of it.

Phil. It seems then you have no idea at all, neither relative nor positive of matter; you know neither what it is in itself nor what relation it bears to accidents?

Hyl. I acknowledge it.

Phil. And yet you asserted that you could not conceive how qualities or accidents should really exist without conceiving at the same time a material support of them?

Hyl. I did.

Phil. That is to say, when you conceive the real existence of qualities, you do in addition conceive something which you cannot conceive.

Hyl. It was wrong I own. But still I fear there is some fallacy or other. Pray, what think you of this? It is just come into my head that the ground of all our mistake lies in your treating of each quality by itself. Now, I grant that each quality cannot singly subsist without the mind. Color cannot without extension, neither can figure without some other sensible quality. But as the several qualities united or blended together form entire sensible things, nothing hinders why such things may not be supposed to exist without the mind.

Phil. Either, Hylas, you are jesting or have a very bad memory. Though, indeed, we went through all the qualities by name one after another, yet my arguments, or rather your concessions, nowhere tended to prove that the secondary qualities did not subsist each alone by itself, but that they were not *at all* without the mind. Indeed, in treating of figure and motion we concluded they could not exist without the mind, because it was impossible even in thought to separate them from all secondary qualities, so as to conceive them existing by themselves. But then this was not the only argument made use of upon that occasion. But—to pass by all that has been so far said and reckon it for nothing, if you will have it so—I am content to put the whole upon this issue. If you can conceive it possible for any mixture or combination of qualities, or any sensible object whatever, to exist without the mind, then I will grant it actually to be so.

Hyl. If it comes to that, the point will soon be decided. What is more easy than to conceive a tree or house existing by itself, independent of, and unperceived by, any mind whatsoever? I do at this present time conceive them existing after that manner.

Phil. What are you saying, Hylas—can you see a thing which is at the same time unseen?

Hyl. No, that would be a contradiction.

Phil. Is it not as great a contradiction to talk of *conceiving* a thing which is *unconceived*?

Hyl. It is.

Phil. The tree or house, therefore, which you think of is conceived by you?

Hyl. How should it be otherwise?

Phil. And what is conceived is surely in the mind?

Hyl. Without question, that which is conceived is in the mind.

Phil. How then did you come to say you conceived a house or tree existing independent and out of all minds whatsoever?

Hyl. That was, I own, an oversight, but stay, let me consider what led me into it. It is a pleasant mistake enough. As I was thinking of a tree in a solitary place, where no one was present to see it, I thought that was to conceive a tree as existing unperceived or unthought of, not considering that I myself conceived it all the while. But now I plainly see that all I can do is to frame ideas in my own mind. I may indeed conceive in my own thoughts the idea of a tree, or a house, or a mountain, but that is all. And this is far from proving that I can conceive them *existing out of the minds of all spirits*.

Phil. You acknowledge then that you cannot possibly conceive how any one corporeal sensible thing should exist otherwise than in the mind?

Hyl. I do.

Phil. And yet you will earnestly contend for the truth of that which you cannot so much as conceive?

Hyl. I profess I do not know what to think; but still there are some scruples[18] that remain with me. Is it not certain I see things at a distance? Do we not perceive the stars and moon, for example, to be a great way off? Is not this, I say, manifest to the senses?

Phil. Do you not in a dream, too, perceive those or the like objects?

Hyl. I do.

Phil. And have they not then the same appearance of being distant?

Hyl. They have.

Phil. But you do not conclude from this the apparitions in a dream to be without the mind?

Hyl. By no means.

Phil. You ought not therefore to conclude that sensible objects are without the mind, from their appearance or manner wherein they are perceived.

Hyl. I acknowledge it. But does not my sense deceive me in those cases?

Phil. By no means. The idea or thing which you immediately perceive, neither sense nor reason informs you that it actually exists without the mind. By sense you only know that you are affected with such certain sensations of light and colors, etc. And these you will not say are without the mind.

Hyl. True, but, besides all that, do you not think the sight suggests something of *outness* or *distance*?

Phil. Upon approaching a distant object, do the visible size and figure change perpetually or do they appear the same at all distances?

Hyl. They are in a continual change.

Phil. Sight, therefore, does not suggest or any way inform you, that the visible object you immediately perceive, exists at a distance,* or will be perceived when you advance farther onward, there being a continued series of visible objects succeeding each other during the whole time of your approach.

Hyl. It does not; but still I know, upon seeing an object, what object I shall perceive after having passed over a certain distance. No matter whether it is exactly the same or not, there is still something of distance suggested in the case.

Phil. Good Hylas, do but reflect a little on the point, and then tell me whether there is any more in it than this. From the ideas you actually perceive by sight, you have by experience learned to collect what other ideas you will—according to the standing order of nature—be affected with, after such a certain succession of time and motion.

Hyl. Upon the whole, I take it to be nothing else.

Phil. Now is it not plain that if we suppose a man born blind, was on a sudden made to see, he could at first have no experience of what may be suggested by sight.[19]

Hyl. It is.

Phil. He would not then, according to you, have any notion of distance annexed to the things he saw, but would take them for a new set of sensations existing only in his mind?

Hyl. It is undeniable.

Phil. But to make it still more plain: is not *distance* a line turned endwise to the eye?

Hyl. It is.

Phil. And can a line so situated be perceived by sight?

Hyl. It cannot.

Phil. Does it not therefore follow that distance is not properly and immediately perceived by sight?

Hyl. It should seem so.

Phil. Again, is it your opinion that colors are at a distance?

Hyl. It must be acknowledged they are only in the mind.

Phil. But do not colors appear to the eye as coexisting in the same place with extension and figures?

Hyl. They do.

Phil. How can you then conclude from sight that figures exist without, when you acknowledge colors do not; the sensible appearance being the very same with regard to both?

Hyl. I do not know what to answer.

Phil. But allowing that distance was truly and immediately perceived by the mind, yet it would not follow from this that it existed out of the mind. For whatever is immediately perceived is an idea—and can any *idea* exist out of the mind?

Hyl. To suppose that would be absurd. But, inform me, Philonous, can we perceive or know nothing besides our ideas?

Phil. As for the rational deducing of causes from effects, that is beside our inquiry. And by the senses you can best tell whether you perceive anything which is not immediately perceived. And I ask you whether the things immediately perceived are other than your own sensations or ideas? You have indeed more than once, in the course of this conversation, declared* yourself on those points, but you seem by this last question to have departed from what you then thought.

Hyl. To speak the truth, Philonous, I think there are two kinds of objects: the one perceived immediately, which are likewise called "ideas," the other are real things or external objects perceived by the mediation of ideas, which are their images and representations. Now I own ideas do not† exist without the mind, but the latter sort of objects do. I am sorry I did not think of this distinction sooner; it would probably have cut short your discourse.

Phil. Are those external objects perceived by sense or by some other faculty?

Hyl. They are perceived by sense.

Phil. How? Is there anything perceived by sense which is not immediately perceived?

Hyl. Yes, Philonous, in some sort there is. For example, when I look on a picture or statue of Julius Caesar, I may be said, after a manner, to perceive him—though not immediately—by my senses.

Phil. It seems then you will have our ideas, which alone are immediately perceived, to be pictures of external things, and that these also are perceived

by sense inasmuch as they have a conformity or resemblance to our ideas?

Hyl. That is my meaning.

Phil. And in the same way that Julius Caesar, in himself invisible, is nevertheless perceived by sight, real things, in themselves imperceptible, are perceived by sense.

Hyl. In the very same.

Phil. Tell me, Hylas, when you behold the picture of Julius Caesar, do you see with your eyes any more than some colors and figures with a certain symmetry and composition of the whole?

Hyl. Nothing else.

Phil. And would not a man who had never known anything of Julius Caesar see as much?

Hyl. He would.

Phil. Consequently, he has his sight and the use of it in as perfect a degree as you.

Hyl. I agree with you.

Phil. From where does it come then that your thoughts are directed to the Roman emperor, and his are not? This cannot proceed from the sensations or ideas of sense by you then perceived, since you acknowledge you have no advantage over him in that respect. It should seem therefore to proceed from reason and memory—should it not?

Hyl. It should.

Phil. Consequently, it will not follow from that instance that anything is perceived by sense which is not immediately perceived. Though I grant we may in one acceptation be said to perceive sensible things mediately by sense—that is, when, from a frequently perceived connection, the immediate perception of ideas by one sense suggests to the mind others perhaps belonging to another sense, which are accustomed to be connected with them. For instance, when I hear a coach drive along the streets, immediately I perceive only the sound; but from the experience I have had that such a sound is connected with a coach, I am said to hear the coach. It is nevertheless evident that, in truth and strictness, nothing can be *heard* but *sound*; and the coach is not then properly perceived by sense, but suggested from experience. So likewise when we are said to see a red-hot bar of iron; the solidity and heat of the iron are not the objects of sight, but suggested to the imagination by the color and figure, which are properly perceived by that sense. In short, those things alone are actually and strictly perceived* by

any sense which would have been perceived in case that same sense had then been first conferred on us. As for other things, it is plain they are only suggested to the mind by experience grounded on former perceptions. But to return to your comparison of Caesar's picture, it is plain, if you keep to that, you must hold the real things or archetypes of our ideas are not perceived by sense, but by some internal faculty of the soul, as reason or memory. I would therefore fain know what arguments you can draw from reason for the existence of what you call "real things" or "material objects," or whether you remember to have seen them formerly as they are in themselves, or if you have heard or read of any one that did.

Hyl. I see, Philonous, you are disposed to raillery;[20] but that will never convince me.

Phil. My aim is only to learn from you, the way to come at the knowledge of "material beings."[†] Whatever we perceive is perceived either immediately or mediately—by sense, or by reason and reflection. But, as you have excluded sense, pray show me what reason you have to believe their existence, or what *medium* you can possibly make use of to prove it either to mine or your own understanding.

Hyl. To deal ingenuously, Philonous, now that I consider the point, I do not find I can give you any good reason for it. But this much seems pretty plain, that it is at least possible such things may really exist. And as long as there is no absurdity in supposing them, I am resolved to believe as I did, until you bring good reasons to the contrary.

Phil. What?! Is it come to this, that you only believe the existence of material objects, and that your belief is founded barely on the possibility of its being true? Then you will have me bring reasons against it, though another would think it reasonable the proof should lie on him who holds the affirmative. And, after all, this very point which you are now resolved to maintain without any reason is in effect what you have more than once during this discourse seen good reason to give up. But to pass over all this —if I understand you rightly, you say our ideas do not exist without the mind, but that they are copies, images, or representations of certain originals that do?

Hyl. You take me right.

Phil. They are then like external things?

Hyl. They are.

Phil. Have those things a stable and permanent nature, independent of our senses, or are they in a perpetual change, upon our producing any motions in our bodies, suspending, exerting, or altering our faculties or organs of sense?

Hyl. Real things, it is plain, have a fixed and real nature, which remains the same notwithstanding any change in our senses or in the posture and motion of our bodies, which indeed may affect the ideas in our minds, but it would be absurd to think they had the same effect on things existing without the mind.

Phil. How then is it possible that things perpetually fleeting and variable as our ideas should be copies or images of anything fixed and constant? Or, in other words, since all sensible qualities, as size, figure, color, etc.—that is, our ideas—are continually changing upon every alteration in the distance, medium, or instruments of sensation, how can any determinate material objects be properly represented or painted forth by several distinct things, each of which is so different from and unlike the rest? Or, if you say it resembles some one only of our ideas, how shall we be able to distinguish the true copy from all the false ones?

Hyl. I profess, Philonous, I am at a loss. I do not know what to say to this.

Phil. But neither is this all. Which are material objects in themselves—perceptible or imperceptible?

Hyl. Properly and immediately nothing can be perceived but ideas. All material things, therefore, are in themselves insensible and to be perceived only by our ideas.

Phil. Ideas then are sensible, and their archetypes or originals insensible?

Hyl. Right.

Phil. But how can that which is sensible be like that which is insensible? Can a real thing, in itself *invisible*, be like a *color*, or a real thing which is not *audible* be like a *sound*? In a word, can anything be like a sensation or idea, but another sensation or idea?

Hyl. I must own, I think not.

Phil. Is it possible there should be any doubt in the point? Do you not perfectly know your own ideas?

Hyl. I know them perfectly, since what I do not perceive or know can be no part of my idea.

Phil. Consider, therefore, and examine them, and then tell me if there is anything in them which can exist without the mind, or if you can conceive anything like them existing without the mind.

Hyl. Upon inquiry, I find it is impossible for me to conceive or understand how anything but an idea can be like an idea. And it is most evident that *no idea can exist without the mind*.

Phil. You are, therefore, by your principles forced to deny the reality of sensible things, since you made it to consist in an absolute existence exterior to the mind. That is to say, you are a downright *skeptic*. So I have gained my point, which was to show your principles led to skepticism.

Hyl. For the present I am, if not entirely convinced, at least silenced.

Phil. I would fain know what more you would require in order to have a perfect conviction. Have you not had the liberty of explaining yourself all manner of ways? Were any little slips in discourse laid hold and insisted on? Or were you not allowed to retract or reinforce anything you had offered as best served your purpose? Has not everything you could say been heard and examined with all the fairness imaginable? In a word, have you not in every point been convinced out of your own mouth? And, if you can at present discover any flaw in any of your former concessions, or think of any remaining subterfuge, any new distinction, color, or comment whatsoever, why do you not produce it?

Hyl. A little patience, Philonous. I am at present so amazed to see myself ensnared, and as it were imprisoned in the labyrinths you have drawn me into, that on the sudden it cannot be expected I should find my way out. You must give me time to look about me and recollect myself.

Phil. Listen—is not this the college bell?

Hyl. It rings for prayers.

Phil. We will go in then, if you please, and meet here again tomorrow morning. In the meantime, you may employ your thoughts on this morning's discourse and try if you can find any fallacy in it, or invent any new means to extricate yourself.

Hyl. Agreed.

Endnotes

1. *abroad*: outdoors.
2. *vulgar*: the common or ordinary class of people.
3. *Pray*: 'Please tell'.

4. *repugnancies*: contradictions or inconsistencies.
5. *a suspense*: suspension or uncertainty.
6. *own*: acknowledge, admit, or confess.
7. *wormwood*: the plant *Artemisia absinthium*, known for its bitter taste.
8. *fain*: gladly, willingly, or with pleasure.
9. *ordure*: excrement.
10. *common acceptation*: received meaning.
11. *dioptrics*: that part of the science of optics which treats of the refraction of light, as opposed to catoptics which treats of reflection.
12. On the primary-secondary quality distinction, see the editor's introduction 13–14.
13. *describing*: traveling.
14. *Schools*: The "philosophy of the Schools" or "Scholasticism" refers to the philosophical tradition that arose in the universities of medieval Europe and is associated with the methods and views of the major philosophers of the 13th and 14th centuries, including Aquinas, Scotus, and Ockham. Scholasticism dominated European philosophy into the 15th century.
15. This maxim reflects *nominalism*—the doctrine that abstract entities, or universals, conceived as the supposed referents of general terms such as 'blue' or 'triangle' do not really exist; hence, everything that exists is a particular. Nominalism is opposed to Platonism or realism, which maintains that abstract entities do really exist and that general terms do refer to these entities. The debate over the ontological status of universals was one of the primary topics of philosophical concern in the medieval period. Nominalists like Abelard and Ockham maintained that everything that exists is a particular. The classical empiricists—Hobbes, Locke, Berkeley, and Hume—followed these medieval predecessors in denying that general terms signify universals. Locke, for example, opened his discussion of general terms in *Essay* with, "All things that exist being particulars…" (3.3.1).
16. According to Locke, words refer to ideas, and general words refer to abstract ideas— ideas that are formed from our ideas of particular things by "leaving out…those particulars wherein they differ, and retaining only those wherein they agree" (*Essay* 3.3.9). The process of forming an abstract idea of a triangle, for example, consists in separating out all the features unique to this or that particular triangle and retaining only those features that all particular triangles share in common. The result of this process is the idea of a triangle that is "neither oblique nor rectangle, neither equilateral, equicrural, nor scalenon; but all and none of these at once" (*Essay* 4.7.9). Because he believes that our ideas are determinate in all their features and particular in their content, Berkeley believes that we do not possess an idea of a triangle corresponding to this characterization. In the Introduction to his *Principles* (§6–21), Berkeley offered a thorough critique of Locke's account of abstract ideas, which purported to establish "the impossibility of abstract ideas."
17. Hylas' argument here mirrors Locke's at (*Essay* 2.23.1). This passage is quoted in the editor's introduction, p. 24.
18. *scruples*: doubts or uncertainties.
19. William Molyneaux (1656–98), an Irish philosopher and scientist, posed the following problem in a letter to Locke (1688): "if a man born blind, and able to distinguish by touch between a globe and a cube, were made to see, could he now tell by sight which was the cube and which the globe, before he touched them?" The "Molyneaux problem" was widely discussed in the 18th and 19th centuries. Molyneaux, Locke (*Essay* 2.9.8) and Berkeley (*New Theory of Vision* §121–46) all answered the question in the negative. Leibniz, however, answered in the affirmative. See Morgan, M., *Molyneaux's Question*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).
20. *raillery*: good-humored ridicule.

Notes

* comes it to pass then—comes it then (1713, 1725).
* mind—thoughts (1713, 1725).
* as well grant—as good grant (1713, 1725).
* by the help—by help (1713, 1725).
* are only—consist entirely in (1713, 1725).
† to bethink yourself—to think (1713, 1725).
* were obliged to renounce before—before renounced (1713, 1725).
* concerning—with relation to (1713, 1725).
† concerning—in respect of (1713, 1725).
* The bracketed portion of the text appears only in the 1734 edition.
* or one part—or part (1713, 1725).
* of all those—of light and colors, hard and soft, hot and cold, with the rest of those (1713, 1725).
† size or figure or sensible quality—size, color, etc. (1713, 1725).
* See *An Essay towards a New Theory of Vision* (1709) and *The Theory of Vision, or Visual Language, Showing the Immediate Presence and Providence of a Deity, Vindicated and Explained* (1733). [Berkeley's note—ed.]
* declared—expressed (1713, 1725).
† do not—cannot (1713, 1725).
* actually and strictly perceived—actually perceived (1713, 1725).
† of "material beings"—of those "material beings" (1713, 1725).

The Second Dialogue

Hylas. I beg your pardon, Philonous, for not meeting you sooner. All this morning my head was so filled with our late conversation that I had not leisure to think of the time of the day, or indeed of anything else.

Philonous. I am glad you were so intent upon it, in hopes if there were any mistakes in your concessions, or fallacies in my reasonings from them, you will now discover[1] them to me.

Hyl. I assure you, I have done nothing ever since I saw you but search after mistakes and fallacies, and, with that in view have minutely examined the whole series of yesterday's discourse; but all in vain, for the notions it led me into, upon review, appear still more clear and evident, and the more I consider them, the more irresistibly do they force my assent.

Phil. And is this not, do you think, a sign that they are genuine, that they proceed from nature and are conformable to right reason? Truth and beauty are in this alike, that the strictest* survey sets them both off to advantage, while the false luster of error and disguise cannot endure being reviewed or too nearly inspected.

Hyl. I own there is a great deal in what you say. Nor can anyone be more entirely satisfied of the truth of those odd consequences so long as I have in view the reasonings that lead to them. But when these are out of my thoughts, there seems, on the other hand, something so satisfactory, so natural and intelligible in the modern way of explaining things that I profess I know not how to reject it.

Phil. I do not know what way you mean.

Hyl. I mean the way of accounting for our sensations or ideas.

Phil. How is that?

Hyl. It is supposed the soul makes her residence in some part of the brain, from which the nerves take their rise, and are from there extended to all parts of the body; and that outward objects, by the different impressions they make on the organs of sense, communicate certain vibrating motions to the nerves, and these, being filled with spirits, propagate them to the brain or seat of the soul, which, according to the various impressions or traces thereby made in the brain, is variously affected with ideas.

Phil. And you call this an explication of the manner whereby we are affected with ideas?

Hyl. Why not, Philonous? Have you anything to object against it?

Phil. I would first know whether I rightly understand your hypothesis. You make certain traces in the brain to be the causes or occasions of our ideas. Pray tell me, whether by the "brain" you mean any sensible thing?

Hyl. What else do you think I could mean?

Phil. Sensible things are all immediately perceivable; and those things which are immediately perceivable are ideas; and these exist only in the mind. This much you have, if I am not mistaken, long since agreed to.

Hyl. I do not deny it.

Phil. The brain therefore you speak of, being a sensible thing, exists only in the mind. Now, I would fain know whether you think it reasonable to suppose that one idea or thing existing in the mind occasions all other ideas. And if you think so, pray how do you account for the origin of that primary idea or brain itself?

Hyl. I do not explain the origin of our ideas by that brain which is perceivable to sense, this being itself only a combination of sensible ideas, but by another which I imagine.

Phil. But are not things imagined as truly *in the mind* as things perceived?

Hyl. I must confess they are.

Phil. It comes, therefore, to the same thing; and you have been all this while* accounting for ideas by certain motions or impressions of the brain —that is, by some alterations in an idea, whether sensible or imaginable, it matters not.

Hyl. I begin to suspect my hypothesis.

Phil. Beside spirits, all that we know or conceive are our own ideas. When, therefore, you say all ideas are occasioned by impressions in the brain, do you conceive this brain or not? If you do, then you talk of ideas imprinted in an idea causing that same idea, which is absurd. If you do not conceive it, you talk unintelligibly, instead of forming a reasonable hypothesis.

Hyl. I now clearly see it was a mere dream. There is nothing in it.

Phil. You need not be much concerned about it; for, after all, this way of explaining things, as you called it, could never have satisfied any reasonable man. What connection is there between a motion in the nerves and the sensations of sound or color in the mind? Or how is it possible these should be the effect of that?

Hyl. But I could never think it had so little in it as now it seems to have.

Phil. Well then, are you at length satisfied that no sensible things have a real existence, and that you are in truth an arrant *skeptic*?

Hyl. It is too plain to be denied.

Phil. Look! Are not the fields covered with a delightful verdure[2]? Is there not something in the woods and groves, in the rivers and clear springs, that soothes, that delights,* that transports the soul? At the prospect of the wide and deep ocean, or some huge mountain whose top is lost in the clouds,† or of an old gloomy forest, are not our minds filled with a pleasing horror? Even in rocks and deserts, is there not an agreeable wildness? How sincere a pleasure is it to behold the natural beauties of the earth! To preserve and renew our relish for them, is not the veil of night alternately drawn over her face, and does she not change her dress with the seasons? How aptly are the elements disposed! What variety and use in the meanest productions of nature! ‡ What delicacy, what beauty, what contrivance in animal and vegetable bodies? How exquisitely are all things suited as well to their particular ends as to constitute apposite[4] parts of the whole! And while they mutually aid and support, do they not also set off and illustrate each other? Raise now your thoughts from this ball of earth to all those glorious luminaries that adorn the high arch of heaven. The motion and situation of the planets, are they not admirable for use and order? Were those (miscalled "erratic"[3]) globes ever known§ to stray in their repeated journeys through the pathless void? Do they not measure areas round the sun ever proportioned to the times? So fixed, so immutable are the laws by which the unseen Author of nature actuates the universe. How vivid and radiant is the

luster of the fixed stars! How magnificent and rich that negligent profusion with which they appear to be scattered throughout* the whole azure vault! Yet, if you take the telescope, it brings into your sight a new host of stars that escape the naked eye. Here they seem contiguous and minute, but to a nearer view immense orbs of light at various distances, far sunk in the abyss of space. Now you must call imagination to your aid. The feeble narrow sense cannot descry[5] innumerable worlds revolving round the central fires, and in those worlds the energy of an all-perfect Mind displayed in endless forms. But neither sense nor imagination are big enough to comprehend the boundless extent with all its glittering† furniture. Though the laboring mind exert and strain each power to its utmost reach, there still stands out ungrasped a surplus immeasurable. Yet all the vast bodies that compose this mighty frame, however distant and remote, are by some secret mechanism, some divine art and force linked in a mutual dependence and intercourse with each other, even with this earth, which was almost‡ slipped from my thoughts and lost in the crowd of worlds. Is not the whole system immense, beautiful, glorious beyond expression and beyond thought? What treatment then do those philosophers deserve who would deprive these noble and delightful scenes of all reality? How should those principles be entertained that lead us to think all the visible beauty of the creation a false imaginary glare? To be plain, can you expect this skepticism of yours will not be thought extravagantly absurd by all men of sense?

Hyl. Other men may think as they please, but for your part you have nothing to reproach me with. My comfort is you are as much a skeptic as I am.

Phil. There, Hylas, I must beg leave to differ from you.

Hyl. What?! Have you all along agreed to the premises, and do you now deny the conclusion and leave me to maintain those paradoxes by myself which you led me into? This surely is not fair.

Phil. I deny that I agreed with you in those notions that led to skepticism. You indeed said the reality of sensible things consisted in *an absolute existence* out of the minds of spirits, or distinct from their being perceived. And, pursuant to this notion of reality, you are obliged to deny sensible things any real existence—that is, according to your own definition, you profess yourself a skeptic. But I neither said nor thought the reality of sensible things was to be defined after that manner. To me it is evident, for the reasons you allow of, that sensible things cannot exist otherwise than in

a mind or spirit. From which I conclude, not that they have no real existence, but that, seeing they depend not on my thought and have an existence distinct from being perceived by me, *there must be some other mind in which they exist*. As sure, therefore, as the sensible world really exists, so sure is there an infinite omnipresent Spirit who contains and supports it.

Hyl. What?! This is no more than I and all Christians hold; no, and all others too who believe there is a God and that He knows and comprehends all things.

Phil. Yes, but here lies the difference. Men commonly believe that all things are known or perceived by God because they believe* the being of a God; whereas I, on the other side, immediately and necessarily conclude the being of a God because all sensible things must be perceived by Him.

Hyl. But so long as we all believe the same thing, what does it matter how we come by that belief?

Phil. But neither do we agree in the same opinion. For philosophers, though they acknowledge all corporeal beings to be perceived by God, yet they attribute to them an absolute subsistence distinct from their being perceived by any mind whatever, which I do not. Besides, is there no difference between saying, *there is a God*, *therefore He perceives all things*, and saying, *sensible things do really exist; and if they really exist*, *they are necessarily perceived by an infinite mind; therefore, there is an infinite mind, or God.* This furnishes you with a direct and immediate demonstration, from a most evident principle, of the *being of a God*. Divines and philosophers had proved beyond all controversy, from the beauty and usefulness of the several parts of the creation, that it was the workmanship of God. But that—setting aside all help of astronomy and natural philosophy, all contemplation of the contrivance, order, and adjustment of things—an infinite Mind should be necessarily inferred from the bare existence of the sensible world is an advantage peculiar to them only who have made this easy reflection: that the sensible world is that which we perceive by our several senses; and that nothing is perceived by the senses besides ideas; and that no idea or archetype of an idea can exist otherwise than in a mind. You may now, without any laborious search into the sciences, without any subtlety of reason or tedious length of discourse, oppose and baffle the most strenuous advocate for atheism. Those miserable refuges, whether in an eternal succession of unthinking causes and effects

or in a fortuitous concourse of atoms; those wild imaginations of Vanini, Hobbes, and Spinoza[6]—in a word, the whole system of atheism—is it not entirely overthrown by this single reflection on the repugnancy included in supposing the whole or any part, even the most rude and shapeless, of the visible world to exist without a mind? Let any one of those abettors of impiety but look into his own thoughts, and there try if he can conceive how so much as a rock, a desert, a chaos, or confused jumble of atoms, how anything at all, either sensible or imaginable, can exist independent of a mind, and he need go no further to be convinced of his folly. Can anything be fairer than to put a dispute on such an issue and leave it to a man himself to see if he can conceive, even in thought, what he holds to be true in fact, and from a notion to allow it a real existence?

Hyl. It cannot be denied there is something highly serviceable to religion in what you advance. But do you not think it looks very like a notion entertained by some eminent moderns, of *seeing all things in God*?[7]

Phil. I would gladly know that opinion; pray explain it to me.

Hyl. They conceive that the soul, being immaterial, is incapable of being united with material things so as to perceive them in themselves, but that she perceives them by her union with the substance of God, which, being spiritual is therefore purely intelligible, or capable of being the immediate object of a spirit's thought. Besides, the divine essence contains in it perfections correspondent to each created being, and which are, for that reason, proper to exhibit or represent them to the mind.

Phil. I do not understand how our ideas, which are things altogether passive and inert, can be the essence or any part—or like any part—of the essence or substance of God, who is an impassive, indivisible, purely active being. There are many more difficulties and objections which occur at first view against this hypothesis, but I shall only add that it is liable to all the absurdities of the common hypotheses in making a created world exist otherwise than in the mind of a spirit. Besides all which, it has this peculiar to itself that it makes that material world serve to no purpose. And if it passes for a good argument against other hypotheses in the sciences that they suppose nature or the divine wisdom to make something in vain, or do that by tedious roundabout methods which might have been performed in a much more easy and compendious way, what shall we think of that hypothesis which supposes the whole world made in vain?

Hyl. But what do you say, are not you too of the opinion that we see all things in God? If I am not mistaken, what you advance comes near it.

Phil. [Few men think, yet all will have opinions. Hence men's opinions are superficial and confused. It is nothing strange that tenets which in themselves are ever so different should nevertheless be confounded with each other by those who do not consider them attentively. I shall not therefore be surprised if some men imagine that I run into the enthusiasm of Malebranche, though in truth I am very remote from it. He builds on the most abstract general ideas, which I entirely disclaim. He asserts an absolute external world, which I deny. He maintains that we are deceived by our senses and know not the real natures or the true forms and figures of extended beings—to all of which I hold the direct contrary. So that, upon the whole, there are no principles more fundamentally opposite than his and mine. It must be owned]* I entirely agree with what the Holy Scripture says, "That in God we live, and move, and have our being."[8] But that we see things in His essence, after the manner above set forth, I am far from believing. Take here in brief my meaning. It is evident that the things I perceive are my own ideas, and that no idea can exist unless it is in a mind. Nor is it less plain that these ideas, or things perceived by me, either themselves or their archetypes, exist independently of my mind, since I know myself not to be their author, it being out of my power to determine at pleasure, what particular ideas I shall be affected with upon opening my eyes or ears. They must therefore exist in some other mind, whose will it is they should be exhibited to me. The things, I say, immediately perceived, are ideas or sensations, call them whichever you will. But how can any idea or sensation exist in, or be produced by, anything but a mind or spirit? This indeed is inconceivable; and to assert that which is inconceivable is to talk nonsense, is it not?

Hyl. Without doubt.

Phil. But, on the other hand, it is very conceivable that they should exist in and be produced by a spirit, since this is no more than I daily experience in myself—inasmuch as I perceive numberless ideas, and, by an act of my will, can form a great variety of them and raise them up in my imagination —though, it must be confessed, these creatures of the fancy are not altogether so distinct, so strong, vivid, and permanent, as those perceived by my senses, which latter are called "real things." From all which I conclude, *there is a mind which affects me every moment with all the sensible*

impressions I perceive. And from the variety, order, and manner of these I conclude the author of them to be *wise, powerful, and good beyond comprehension*. Mark it well: I do not say I see things by perceiving that which represents them in the intelligible substance of God. This I do not understand; but I say the things perceived by me are known by the understanding and produced by the will of an infinite Spirit. And is not all this most plain and evident? Is there any more in it than what a little observation in our own minds, and that which passes in them, not only enables us to conceive, but also obliges us to acknowledge?

Hyl. I think I understand you very clearly and own the proof you give of a Deity seems no less evident than it is surprising. But allowing that God is the supreme and universal cause of all things, yet may not there be still a third nature besides spirits and ideas? May we not admit a subordinate and limited cause of our ideas? In a word, may there not for all that be *matter*?

Phil. How often must I inculcate the same thing? You allow the things immediately perceived by sense to exist nowhere without the mind; but there is nothing perceived by sense which is not perceived immediately: therefore, there is nothing sensible that exists without the mind. The matter, therefore, which you still insist on is something intelligible, I suppose—something that may be discovered by reason and not by sense.

Hyl. You are in the right.

Phil. Pray let me know what reasoning your belief of matter is grounded on, and what this matter is in your present sense of it.

Hyl. I find myself affected with various ideas of which I know I am not the cause; neither are they the cause of themselves or of one another, or capable of subsisting by themselves, as being altogether inactive, fleeting, dependent beings. They have therefore some cause distinct from me and them, of which I pretend to know no more than that it is *the cause of my ideas*. And this thing, whatever it be, I call "matter."

Phil. Tell me, Hylas, has everyone a liberty to change the current proper signification annexed to a common name in any language? For example, suppose a traveler should tell you that in a certain country men pass unhurt through the fire; and, upon explaining himself, you found he meant by the word "fire" that which others call "water"; or, if he should assert there are trees that walk upon two legs, meaning men by the term "trees." Would you think this reasonable?

Hyl. No, I should think it very absurd. Common custom is the standard of propriety in language. And for any man to affect speaking improperly is to pervert the use of speech, and can never serve to a better purpose than to protract and multiply disputes where there is no difference in opinion.

Phil. And does not "matter," in the common current acceptation of the word, signify an extended, solid, moveable, unthinking, inactive substance?

Hyl. It does.

Phil. And has it not been made evident that no such substance can possibly exist? And though it should be allowed to exist, yet how can that which is *inactive* be a *cause*, or that which is *unthinking* be a *cause of thought*? You may, indeed, if you please, annex to the word "matter" a contrary meaning to what is vulgarly received, and tell me you understand by it an unextended, thinking, active being which is the cause of our ideas. But what else is this than to play with words and run into that very fault you just now condemned with so much reason? I do by no means find fault with your reasoning, in that you collect a cause from the phenomena; but I deny that the cause deducible by reason can properly be termed "matter."

Hyl. There is indeed something in what you say. But I am afraid you do not thoroughly comprehend my meaning. I would by no means be thought to deny that God, or an infinite Spirit, is the supreme cause of all things. All I contend for is that, subordinate to the Supreme Agent there is a cause of a limited and inferior nature, which concurs in the production of our ideas, not by any act of will or spiritual efficiency, but by that kind of action which belongs to matter, namely, motion.

Phil. I find you are at every turn relapsing into your old exploded conceit of a moveable and consequently an extended substance existing without the mind. What?! Have you already forgotten you were convinced, or are you willing I should repeat what has been said on that head? In truth this is not fair dealing in you still to suppose the being of that which you have so often acknowledged to have no being. But, not to insist further on what has been so largely handled, I ask whether all your ideas are not perfectly passive and inert, including nothing of action in them.

Hyl. They are.

Phil. And are sensible qualities anything else but ideas?

Hyl. How often have I acknowledged that they are not.

Phil. But is not motion a sensible quality?

Hyl. It is.

Phil. Consequently, it is no action?

Hyl. I agree with you. And indeed it is very plain that when I stir my finger it remains passive, but my will which produced the motion is active.

Phil. Now I desire to know, in the first place, whether, motion being allowed to be no action, you can conceive any action besides volition; and, in the second place, whether to say something and conceive nothing is not to talk nonsense; and, lastly, whether, having considered the premises, you do not perceive that to suppose any efficient or active cause of our ideas other than *spirit* is highly absurd and unreasonable?

Hyl. I give up the point entirely. But, though matter may not be a cause, yet what hinders its being an *instrument* subservient to the Supreme Agent in the production of our ideas?

Phil. An instrument, you say; pray what may be the figure, springs, wheels, and motions of that instrument?

Hyl. Those I pretend to determine nothing of, both the substance and its qualities being entirely unknown to me.

Phil. What?! You are then of opinion it is made up of unknown parts, that it has unknown motions, and an unknown shape?

Hyl. I do not believe that it has any figure or motion at all, being already convinced that no sensible qualities can exist in an unperceiving substance.

Phil. But what notion is it possible to frame of an instrument void of all sensible qualities, even extension itself?

Hyl. I do not pretend to have any notion of it.

Phil. And what reason do you have to think this unknown, this inconceivable something does exist? Is it that you imagine God cannot act as well without it, or that you find by experience the use of some such thing when you form ideas in your own mind?

Hyl. You are always teasing me for reasons of my belief. Pray what reasons have you not to believe it?

Phil. It is to me a sufficient reason not to believe the existence of anything if I see no reason for believing it. But, not to insist on reasons for believing, you will not so much as let me know what it is you would have me believe, since you say you have no manner of notion of it. After all, let me entreat you to consider whether it is like a philosopher, or even like a man of common sense, to pretend to believe you know not what, and you know not why.

Hyl. Hold, Philonous. When I tell you matter is an *instrument*, I do not mean altogether nothing. It is true, I know not the particular kind of instrument, but, however, I have some notion of *instrument in general*, which I apply to it.

Phil. But what if it should prove that there is something, even in the most general notion of *instrument*, as taken in a distinct sense from *cause*, which makes the use of it inconsistent with the divine attributes?

Hyl. Make that appear and I shall give up the point.

Phil. What do you mean by the general nature or notion of instrument?

Hyl. That which is common to all particular instruments composes the general notion.

Phil. Is it not common to all instruments that they are applied to doing those things only which cannot be performed by the mere act of our wills? Thus, for instance, I never use an instrument to move my finger, because it is done by a volition. But I should use one if I were to remove part of a rock or tear up a tree by the roots. Are you of the same mind? Or can you show any example where an instrument is made use of in producing an effect immediately depending on the will of the agent?

Hyl. I own I cannot.

Phil. How, therefore, can you suppose that an all-perfect Spirit, on whose will all things have an absolute and immediate dependence, should need an instrument in His operations or, not needing it, make use of it? Thus it seems to me that you are obliged to own the use of a lifeless inactive instrument to be incompatible with the infinite perfection of God—that is, by your own confession, to give up the point.

Hyl. It does not readily occur what I can answer you.

Phil. But I think you should be ready to own the truth when it has been fairly proved to you. We, indeed, who are beings of finite powers, are forced to make use of instruments. And the use of an instrument shows the agent to be limited by rules of another's prescription, and that he cannot obtain his end but in such a way and by such conditions. From which it seems a clear consequence that the Supreme Unlimited Agent uses no tool or instrument at all. The will of an Omnipotent Spirit is no sooner exerted than executed, without the application of means, which, if they are employed by inferior agents, it is not upon account of any real efficacy that is in them, or necessary aptitude to produce any effect, but merely in compliance with the laws of nature or those conditions prescribed scribed to

them by the First Cause, who is Himself above all limitation or prescription whatsoever.

Hyl. I will no longer maintain that matter is an instrument. However, I would not be understood to give up its existence neither, since, notwithstanding what has been said, it may still be an *occasion*.

Phil. How many shapes is your matter to take? Or how often must it be proved not to exist, before you are content to part with it? But to say no more of this—though by all the laws of disputation I may justly blame you for so frequently changing the signification of the principal term—I would fain know what you mean by affirming that matter is an occasion, having already denied it to be a cause. And when you have shown in what sense you understand "occasion," pray, in the next place, be pleased to show me what reason induces you to believe there is such an occasion of our ideas?

Hyl. As to the first point: by "occasion" I mean an inactive unthinking being, at the presence whereof God excites ideas in our minds.

Phil. And what may be the nature of that inactive, unthinking being?

Hyl. I know nothing of its nature.

Phil. Proceed then to the second point and assign some reason why we should allow an existence to this inactive, unthinking, unknown thing.

Hyl. When we see ideas produced in our minds after an orderly and constant manner, it is natural to think they have some fixed and regular occasions at the presence of which they are excited.

Phil. You acknowledge then God alone to be the cause of our ideas, and that He causes them at the presence of those occasions.

Hyl. That is my opinion.

Phil. Those things which you say are present to God, without doubt He perceives.

Hyl. Certainly—otherwise they could not be to Him an occasion of acting.

Phil. Not to insist now on your making sense of this hypothesis, or answering all the puzzling questions and difficulties it is liable to: I only ask whether the order and regularity observable in the series of our ideas, or the course of nature, is not sufficiently accounted for by the wisdom and power of God; and whether it does not derogate from those attributes to suppose He is influenced, directed, or put in mind, when and what He is to act, by any unthinking substance? And, lastly, whether, in case I granted all you contend for, it would make anything to your purpose, it not being easy to

conceive how the external or absolute existence of an unthinking substance, distinct from its being perceived, can be inferred from my allowing that there are certain things perceived by the mind of God which are to Him the occasion of producing ideas in us?

Hyl. I am perfectly at a loss what to think, this notion of occasion seeming now altogether as groundless as the rest.

Phil. Do you not at length perceive that in all these different acceptations of matter you have been only supposing you know not what, for no manner of reason and to no kind of use?

Hyl. I freely own myself less fond of my notions, since they have been so accurately examined. But still, I think I have some confused perception that there is such a thing as matter.

Phil. Either you perceive the being of matter immediately or mediately. If immediately, pray inform me by which of the senses you perceive it. If mediately, let me know by what reasoning it is inferred from those things which you perceive immediately. So much for the perception. Then for the matter itself, I ask whether it is object, substratum, cause, instrument, or occasion? You have already pleaded for each of these, shifting your notions, and making matter to appear sometimes in one shape, then in another. And what you have offered has been disapproved and rejected by yourself. If you have anything new to advance I would gladly hear it.

Hyl. I think I have already offered all I had to say on those heads. I am at a loss what more to urge.

Phil. And yet you are loath to part with your old prejudice. But to make you quit it more easily, I desire that, besides what has been suggested up till now, you will further consider whether, upon supposition that matter exists, you can possibly conceive how you should be affected by it. Or, supposing it did not exist, whether it is not evident you might for all that be affected with the same ideas you now are, and consequently have the very same reasons to believe its existence that you now can have?

Hyl. I acknowledge it is possible we might perceive all things just as we do now, though there was no matter in the world; neither can I conceive, if there is matter, how it should produce any idea in our minds. And I do further grant you have entirely satisfied me that it is impossible there should be such a thing as matter in any of the foregoing acceptations. But still I cannot help supposing that there is matter in some sense or other. What that is I do not indeed pretend to determine.

Phil. I do not expect you should define exactly the nature of that unknown being. Only be pleased to tell me, whether it is a substance— and if so, whether you can suppose a substance without accidents; or in case you suppose it to have accidents or qualities, I desire you will let me know what those qualities are, at least what is meant by matter's supporting them?

Hyl. We have already argued on those points. I have no more to say to them. But, to prevent any further questions, let me tell you I at present understand by "matter" neither substance nor accident, thinking nor extended being, neither cause, instrument, nor occasion, but something entirely unknown, distinct from all these.

Phil. It seems then you include in your present notion of matter nothing but the general abstract idea of *entity*.

Hyl. Nothing else, save only that I superadd to this general idea the negation of all those particular things, qualities, or ideas that I perceive, imagine, or in any way apprehend.

Phil. Pray where do you suppose this unknown matter to exist?

Hyl. Oh Philonous! Now you think you have entangled me; for if I say it exists in place, then you will infer that it exists in the mind, since it is agreed that place or extension exists only in the mind. But I am not ashamed to own my ignorance. I know not where it exists; only I am sure it exists not in place. There is a negative answer for you—and you must expect no other to all the questions you put for the future about matter.

Phil. Since you will not tell me where it exists, be pleased to inform me after what manner you suppose it to exist, or what you mean by its existence?

Hyl. It neither thinks nor acts, neither perceives nor is perceived.

Phil. But what is there positive in your abstracted notion of its existence?

Hyl. Upon a nice observation, I do not find I have any positive notion or meaning at all. I tell you again, I am not ashamed to own my ignorance. I know not what is meant by its existence or how it exists.

Phil. Continue, good Hylas, to act the same ingenuous part and tell me sincerely whether you can frame a distinct idea of entity in general, prescinded[9] from and exclusive of all thinking and corporeal beings, all particular things whatsoever.

Hyl. Hold, let me think a little— I profess, Philonous, I do not find that I can. At first glance I thought I had some dilute and airy notion of pure entity in abstract, but upon closer attention it has quite vanished out of

sight. The more I think on it, the more am I confirmed in my prudent resolution of giving none but negative answers and not pretending to the least degree of any positive knowledge or conception of matter, its *where*, its *how*, its *entity*, or anything belonging to it.

Phil. When, therefore, you speak of the existence of matter, you have not any notion in your mind?

Hyl. None at all.

Phil. Pray tell me if the case stands not thus: At first, from a belief of material substance, you would have it that the immediate objects existed without the mind; then, that their archetypes; then, causes; next, instruments; then, occasions; lastly, *something in general*, which being interpreted proves *nothing*. So matter comes to nothing. What do you think, Hylas, is not this a fair summary of your whole proceeding?

Hyl. Be that as it will, yet I still insist upon it, that our not being able to conceive a thing is no argument against its existence.

Phil. That from a cause, effect, operation, sign, or other circumstance there may reasonably be inferred the existence of a thing not immediately perceived, and that it would be absurd for any man to argue against the existence of that thing from his having no direct and positive notion of it, I freely own. But where there is nothing of all this; where neither reason nor revelation induce us to believe the existence of a thing; where we have not even a relative notion of it; where an abstraction is made from perceiving and being perceived, from spirit and idea; lastly,* where there is not so much as the most inadequate or faint idea pretended to, I will not, indeed, then conclude against the reality of any notion or existence of anything; but my inference shall be that you mean nothing at all, that you employ words to no manner of purpose, without any design or signification whatsoever. And I leave it to you to consider how mere jargon should be treated.

Hyl. To deal frankly with you, Philonous, your arguments seem in themselves unanswerable, but they have not so great an effect on me as to produce that entire conviction, that hearty acquiescence which attends demonstration. I find myself relapsing into an obscure surmise of I know not what—*matter*.

Phil. But are you not sensible, Hylas, that two things must concur to take away all scruple and work a plenary assent in the mind? Let a visible object be set in never so clear a light, yet, if there is any imperfection in the sight, or if the eye is not directed towards it, it will not be distinctly seen. And

though a demonstration be never so well grounded and fairly proposed, yet, if there is in addition a stain of prejudice or a wrong bias on the understanding, can it be expected on a sudden to perceive clearly and adhere firmly to the truth? No, there is need of time and pains: the attention must be awakened and detained by a frequent repetition of the same thing placed often in the same, often in different lights. I have said it already, and find I must still repeat and inculcate, that it is an unaccountable license you take in pretending to maintain you know not what, for you know not what reason, to you know not what purpose. Can this be paralleled in any art or science, any sect or profession of men? Or is there anything so barefacedly groundless and unreasonable to be met with even in the lowest of common conversation? But, perhaps, you will still say, matter may exist, though at the same time you neither know what is meant by "matter" nor by its "existence." This indeed is surprising, and the more so because it is altogether voluntary,* you not being led to it by any one reason; for I challenge you to show me that thing in nature which needs matter to explain or account for it.

Hyl. The reality of things cannot be maintained without supposing the existence of matter. And is not this, you think, a good reason why I should be earnest in its defense?

Phil. The reality of things! What things, sensible or intelligible?

Hyl. Sensible things.

Phil. My glove, for example?

Hyl. That or any other thing perceived by the senses.

Phil. But to fix on some particular thing, is it not a sufficient evidence to me of the existence of this *glove* that I see it, and feel it, and wear it? Or, if this will not do, how is it possible I should be assured of the reality of this thing which I actually see in this place by supposing that some unknown thing, which I never did or can see, exists after an unknown manner, in an unknown place, or in no place at all? How can the supposed reality of that which is intangible be a proof that anything tangible really exists? Or of that which is invisible, that any visible thing, or, in general, of anything which is imperceptible, that a perceptible exists? Do but explain this, and I shall think nothing too hard for you.

Hyl. Upon the whole, I am content to own the existence of matter is highly improbable; but the direct and absolute impossibility of it does not appear to me.

Phil. But granting matter to be possible, yet, upon that account merely, it can have no more claim to existence than a golden mountain or a centaur.

Hyl. I acknowledge it, but still you do not deny it is possible; and that which is possible, for all you know, may actually exist.

Phil. I deny it to be possible, and have, if I am not mistake, evidently proved from your own concessions that it is not. In the common sense of the word "matter," is there any more implied, than an extended, solid, figured, moveable substance existing without the mind? And have not you acknowledged over and over that you have seen evident reason for denying the possibility of such a substance?

Hyl. True, but that is only one sense of the term "matter."

Phil. But is it not the only proper genuine received sense? And if matter in such a sense is proved impossible, may it not be thought with good grounds absolutely impossible? How else could anything be proved impossible? Or, indeed, how could there be any proof at all one way or other to a man who takes the liberty to unsettle and change the common signification of words?

Hyl. I thought philosophers might be allowed to speak more accurately than the vulgar and were not always confined to the common acceptation of a term.

Phil. But this now mentioned is the common received sense among philosophers themselves. But, not to insist on that, have you not been allowed to take matter in what sense you pleased? And have you not used this privilege in the utmost extent, sometimes entirely changing, at others leaving out or putting into the definition of it whatever for the present best served your design, contrary to all the known rules of reason and logic? And has not this shifting, unfair method of yours spun out our dispute to an unnecessary length, matter having been particularly examined and by your own confession refuted in each of those senses? And can any more be required to prove the absolute impossibility of a thing than proving it impossible in every particular sense that either you or anyone else understands it in?

Hyl. But I am not so thoroughly satisfied that you have proved the impossibility of matter in the last most obscure, abstracted, and indefinite sense.

Phil. When is a thing shown to be impossible?

Hyl. When a repugnancy is demonstrated between the ideas comprehended in its definition.

Phil. But where there are no ideas, there no repugnancy can be demonstrated between ideas?

Hyl. I agree with you.

Phil. Now, in that which you call the obscure, indefinite sense of the word "matter," it is plain, by your own confession, there was included no idea at all, no sense except an unknown sense, which is the same thing as none. You are not, therefore, to expect I should prove a repugnancy between ideas where there are no ideas, or the impossibility of matter taken in an *unknown* sense—that is, no sense at all. My business was only to show you meant *nothing*, and this you were brought to own. So that, in all your various senses, you have been shown either to mean nothing at all or, if anything, an absurdity. And if this is not sufficient to prove the impossibility of a thing, I desire you will let me know what is.

Hyl. I acknowledge you have proved that matter is impossible; nor do I see what more can be said in defense of it. But, at the same time that I give up this, I suspect all my other notions. For surely none could be more seemingly evident than this once was, and yet it now seems as false and absurd as ever it did true before. But I think we have discussed the point sufficiently for the present. The remaining part of the day I would willingly spend in running over in my thoughts the several heads of this morning's conversation, and tomorrow shall be glad to meet you here again about the same time.

Phil. I will not fail to attend you.

Endnotes

1. *discover*: reveal.
2. *verdure*: green vegetation.
3. *apposite*: appropriate or well-suited.
4. *"erratic"*: wandering or having no fixed course.
5. *descry*: perceive or observe.
6. Three philosophers believed by many early-modern thinkers to personify atheism. Giulio Cesare Vanini (1585–1619) was executed by the Parlement of Toulouse for atheism, blasphemy, and impiety. Vanini maintained the eternity of matter in his *De admirandis naturæ reginæ* (1616). In 1666 the English House of Commons passed a bill that included Thomas Hobbes' (1588–1679) *Leviathan* (1651) among other works to be investigated for atheistic tendencies. Hobbes was perhaps the most thoroughgoing materialist of the 17th century, and he maintained that God must be material. This, as well as his determinism, were taken to be wholly inconsistent with christian theology. Benedict de Spinoza (1632–77) was excommunicated from the Jewish synagogue in

Amsterdam in 1656. He was taken to be an atheist because he identified God with nature and developed a thoroughly naturalistic and deterministic philosophy.

7. The reference is to Nicolas Malebranche (1638–1715). See the editor's introduction 8–9 and 43.
8. Acts 17:28.
9. *prescinded*: detached or separated.

Notes

* strictest—nicest (1713, 1725).
* this while—the while (1713, 1725).
* delights—softens (1713, 1725).
† clouds—sky (1713, 1725).
‡ in the meanest productions of nature—in stones and minerals (1713, 1725).
§ ever known—once known (1713, 1725).
* throughout—though (1713, 1725).
† glittering—dazzling (1713, 1725).
‡ which was almost—which almost (1713, 1725).
* believe—believed (1713, 1725).
* The bracketed portion of the text appears only in the 1734 edition.
* lastly—in fine (1713, 1725).
* voluntary—voluntary and of your own head (1713, 1725).

The Third Dialogue

Philonous. Tell me, Hylas,* what are the fruits of yesterday's meditation? Has it confirmed you in the same mind you were in at parting, or have you since seen cause to change your opinion?

Hylas. Truly my opinion is that all our opinions are alike vain and uncertain. What we approve today, we condemn tomorrow. We keep a stir about knowledge and spend our lives in the pursuit of it, when, alas, we know nothing all the while; nor do I think it possible for us ever to know anything in this life. Our faculties are too narrow and too few. Nature certainly never intended us for speculation.

Phil. What?! You say we can know nothing, Hylas?

Hyl. There is not that single thing in the world of which we can know the real nature, or what it is in itself.

Phil. Will you tell me I do not really know what fire or water is?

Hyl. You may indeed know that fire appears hot, and water fluid; but this is no more than knowing what sensations are produced in your own mind upon the application of fire and water to your organs of sense. Their internal constitution, their true and real nature, you are utterly in the dark as to *that*.

Phil. Do I not know this to be a real stone that I stand on, and that which I see before my eyes to be a real tree?

Hyl. Know? No, it is impossible you or any man alive should know it. All you know is that you have such a certain idea or appearance in your own mind. But what is this to the real tree or stone? I tell you that color, figure, and hardness, which you perceive, are not the real† natures of those things, or in the least like them. The same may be said of all other real things or corporeal substances which compose the world. They have, none of them,

anything in themselves, like those sensible qualities by us perceived. We should not, therefore, pretend to affirm or know anything of them, as they are in their own nature.

Phil. But surely, Hylas, I can distinguish gold, for example, from iron—and how could this be if I knew not what either truly was?

Hyl. Believe me, Philonous, you can only distinguish between your own ideas. That yellowness, that weight, and other sensible qualities, do you think they are really in the gold? They are only relative to the senses and have no absolute existence in nature. And in pretending to distinguish the species of real things by the appearances in your mind, you may perhaps act as wisely as he that should conclude two men were of a different species because their clothes were not of the same color.

Phil. It seems, then, we are altogether put off with the appearances of things, and those false ones, too. The very meat I eat, and the cloth I wear, have nothing in them like what I see and feel.

Hyl. Even so.

Phil. But is it not strange the whole world should be thus imposed on and so foolish as to believe their senses? And yet I do not know how it is, but men eat, and drink, and sleep, and perform all the offices of life as comfortably and conveniently as if they really knew the things they are conversant about.

Hyl. They do so; but you know ordinary practice does not require a nicety of speculative knowledge. Hence the vulgar retain their mistakes, and for all that make a shift to bustle through the affairs of life. But philosophers know better things.

Phil. You mean they know that they *know nothing*.

Hyl. That is the very top and perfection of human knowledge.

Phil. But are you all this while in earnest, Hylas; and are you seriously persuaded that you know nothing real in the world? Suppose you are going to write, would you not call for pen, ink, and paper, like another man; and do you not know what it is you call for?

Hyl. How often must I tell you that I do not know the real nature of any one thing in the universe? I may indeed upon occasion make use of pen, ink, and paper. But what any one of them is in its own true nature, I declare positively I do not know. And the same is true with regard to every other corporeal thing. And, what is more, we are not only ignorant of the true and real nature of things, but even of their existence. It cannot be denied that we

perceive such certain appearances or ideas; but it cannot be concluded from this that bodies really exist. No, now that I think on it, I must, agreeably to my former concessions, further declare that it is impossible any real corporeal thing should exist in nature.

Phil. You amaze me. Was ever anything more wild and extravagant than the notions you now maintain? And is it not evident you are led into all these extravagances by the belief of *material substance*? This makes you dream of those unknown natures in everything. It is this that occasions your distinguishing between the reality and sensible appearances of things. It is to this you are indebted for being ignorant of what everybody else knows perfectly well. Nor is this all: you are not only ignorant of the true nature of everything, but you do not know whether anything really exists, or whether there are any true natures at all, inasmuch as you attribute to your material beings an absolute or external existence in which you suppose their reality consists. And as you are forced in the end to acknowledge such an existence means either a direct repugnancy or nothing at all, it follows that you are obliged to pull down your own hypothesis of material substance and positively to deny the real existence of any part of the universe. And so you are plunged into the deepest and most deplorable *skepticism* that ever man was. Tell me, Hylas, is it not as I say?

Hyl. I agree with you. material substance was no more than a hypothesis, and a false and groundless one, too. I will no longer spend my breath in defense of it. But whatever hypothesis you advance, or whatever scheme of things you introduce in its stead, I do not doubt it will appear every bit as false; let me but be allowed to question you upon it. That is, suffer me to serve you in your own kind, and I warrant it shall conduct you through as many perplexities and contradictions to the very same state of skepticism that I myself am in at present.

Phil. I assure you, Hylas, I do not pretend to frame any hypothesis at all. I am of a vulgar cast, simple enough to believe my senses and leave things as I find them. To be plain, it is my opinion that the real things are those very things I see and feel, and perceive by my senses. These I know and, finding they answer all the necessities and purposes of life, have no reason to be solicitous about any other unknown beings. A piece of sensible bread, for instance, would stay my stomach better than ten thousand times as much of that insensible, unintelligible, real bread you speak of. It is likewise my opinion that colors and other sensible qualities are on the objects. I cannot

for my life help thinking that snow is white, and fire hot. You, indeed, who by "snow" and "fire" mean certain external, unperceived, unperceiving substances are in the right to deny whiteness or heat to be affections inherent in them. But I, who understand by those words the things I see and feel, am obliged to think like other folks. And as I am no skeptic with regard to the nature of things, so neither am I as to their existence. That a thing should be really perceived by my senses and at the same time not really exist is to me a plain contradiction, since I cannot prescind or abstract, even in thought, the existence of a sensible thing from its being perceived. Wood, stones, fire, water, flesh, iron, and the like things which I name and discourse of are things that I know.* And I should not have known them but that I perceived them by my senses; and things perceived by the senses are immediately perceived; and things immediately perceived are ideas; and ideas cannot exist without the mind; their existence therefore consists in being perceived; when, therefore, they are actually perceived, there can be no doubt of their existence. Away then with all that skepticism, all those ridiculous philosophical doubts. What a jest is it for a philosopher to question the existence of sensible things until he has it proved to him from the veracity of god,[1] or to pretend our knowledge in this point falls short of intuition or demon-stration![2] I might as well doubt of my own being as of the being of those things I actually see and feel.

Hyl. Not so fast, Philonous; you say you cannot conceive how sensible things should exist without the mind. Do you not?

Phil. I do.

Hyl. Supposing you were annihilated, cannot you conceive it possible that things perceivable by sense may still exist?

Phil. I can; but then it must be in another mind. When I deny sensible things an existence out of the mind, I do not mean my mind in particular, but all minds. Now it is plain they have an existence exterior to my mind, since I find them by experience to be independent of it. There is therefore some other mind in which they exist during the intervals between the times of my perceiving them—as likewise they did before my birth, and would do after my supposed annihilation. And as the same is true with regard to all other finite created spirits, it necessarily follows, there is an *omnipresent, eternal Mind* which knows and comprehends all things, and exhibits them to our view in such a manner and according to such rules as He Himself has ordained and are by us termed the "laws of nature."

Hyl. Answer me, Philonous. Are all our ideas perfectly inert beings? Or have they any agency included in them?

Phil. They are altogether passive and inert.

Hyl. And is not God an agent, a being purely active?

Phil. I acknowledge it.

Hyl. No idea, therefore, can be like unto or represent the nature of God?

Phil. It cannot.

Hyl. Since, therefore, you have no idea of the mind of God, how can you conceive it possible that things should exist in His mind? Or, if you can conceive the mind of God without having an idea of it, why may not I be allowed to conceive the existence of matter, notwithstanding that I have no idea of it?

Phil. As to your first question: I own I have properly no idea, either of God or any other spirit; for these, being active, cannot be represented by things perfectly inert, as our ideas are. I do nevertheless know that I, who am a spirit or thinking substance, exist as certainly as I know my ideas exist. Further, I know what I mean by the terms "I" and "myself"; and I know this immediately or intuitively, though I do not perceive it as I perceive a triangle, a color, or a sound. The mind, spirit, or soul is that indivisible, unextended thing which thinks, acts, and perceives. I say "indivisible," because unextended; and "unextended," because extended, figured, moveable things, are ideas; and that which perceives ideas, which thinks and wills, is plainly itself no idea, nor like an idea. Ideas are things inactive and perceived, and spirits a sort of beings altogether different from them. I do not therefore say my soul is an idea, or like an idea. However, taking the word "idea" in a large sense, my soul may be said to furnish me with an idea—that is, an image or likeness of God—though indeed extremely inadequate. For all the notion I have of God is obtained by reflecting on my own soul, heightening its powers, and removing its imperfections.[3] I have, therefore, though not an inactive idea, yet in myself some sort of an active thinking image of the Deity. And though I perceive Him not by sense, yet I have a notion of Him, or know Him by reflection and reasoning. My own mind and my own ideas I have an immediate knowledge of; and, by the help of these, do mediately apprehend the possibility of the existence of other spirits and ideas. Further, from my own being, and from the dependency I find in myself and my ideas, I do, by an act of reason, necessarily infer the existence of a God and of all created

things in the mind of God. So much for your first question. For the second: I suppose by this time you can answer it yourself. For you neither perceive matter objectively, as you do an inactive being or idea, nor know it, as you do yourself by a reflective act. Neither do you mediately apprehend it by similitude[4] of the one or the other, nor yet collect it by reasoning from that which you know immediately. All of which makes the case of *matter* widely different from that of the *Deity*.

[Hyl. You say your own soul supplies you with some sort of an idea or image of God. But at the same time you acknowledge you have, properly speaking, no idea of your own soul. You even affirm that spirits are a sort of beings altogether different from ideas. Consequently, that no idea can be like a spirit. We have, therefore, no idea of any spirit. You admit nevertheless that there is spiritual substance, although you have no idea of it, while you deny there can be such a thing as material substance, because you have no notion or idea of it. Is this fair dealing? To act consistently, you must either admit matter or reject spirit. What do you say to this?[5]

Phil. I say, in the first place, that I do not deny the existence of material substance merely because I have no notion of it, but because the notion of it is inconsistent, or, in other words, because it is repugnant that there should be a notion of it. Many things, for all I know, may exist, of which neither I nor any other man has or can have any idea or notion whatsoever. But then those things must be possible, that is, nothing inconsistent must be included in their definition. I say, secondly, that, although we believe things to exist which we do not perceive, yet we may not believe that any particular thing exists without some reason for such belief; but I have no reason for believing the existence of matter. I have no immediate intuition of it, neither can I mediately from my sensations, ideas, notions, actions, or passions infer an unthinking, unperceiving, inactive substance, either by probable deduction or necessary consequence. Whereas the being of myself, that is, my own soul, mind, or thinking principle, I evidently know by reflection. You will forgive me if I repeat the same things in answer to the same objections. In the very notion or definition of material substance there is included a manifest repugnance and inconsistency. But this cannot be said of the notion of spirit. That ideas should exist in what does not perceive, or be produced by what does not act, is repugnant. But it is no repugnancy to say that a perceiving thing should be the subject of ideas, or an active thing the cause of them. It is granted we have neither an immediate evidence nor

a demonstrative knowledge of the existence of other finite spirits, but it will not then follow that such spirits are on a foot with material substances; if to suppose the one is inconsistent, and it is not inconsistent to suppose the other; if the one can be inferred by no argument, and there is a probability for the other; if we see signs and effects indicating distinct finite agents like ourselves, and see no sign or symptom whatever that leads to a rational belief of matter. I say, lastly, that I have a notion of spirit, though I have not, strictly speaking, an idea of it. I do not perceive it as an idea or by means of an idea, but know it by reflection.

Hyl. Notwithstanding all you have said, to me it seems that, according to your own way of thinking, and in consequence of your own principles, it should follow that you are only a system of floating ideas without any substance to support them.[6] Words are not to be used without a meaning. And as there is no more meaning in *spiritual* substance than in *material* substance, the one is to be exploded as well as the other.

Phil. How often must I repeat that I know or am conscious of my own being, and that I myself am not my ideas, but something else, a thinking active principle that perceives, knows, wills, and operates about ideas. I know that I, one and the same self, perceive both colors and sounds; that a color cannot perceive a sound, nor a sound a color; that I am therefore one individual principle, distinct from color and sound, and, for the same reason, from all other sensible things and inert ideas. But I am not in like manner conscious either of the existence or essence of matter. On the contrary, I know that nothing inconsistent can exist, and that the existence of matter implies an inconsistency. Further, I know what I mean when I affirm that there is a spiritual substance or support of ideas, that is, that a spirit knows and perceives ideas. But I do not know what is meant when it is said that an unperceiving substance has inherent in it and supports either ideas or the archetypes of ideas. There is, therefore, upon the whole no parity of case between spirit and matter.][4]

Hyl. I own myself satisfied in this point. But do you in earnest think the real existence of sensible things consists in their being actually perceived? If so, how does it come that all mankind distinguish between them? Ask the first man you meet, and he shall tell you, *to be perceived* is one thing and *to exist* is another.

Phil. I am content, Hylas, to appeal to the common sense of the world for the truth of my notion. Ask the gardener why he thinks yonder cherry tree

exists in the garden, and he shall tell you, because he sees and feels it—in a word, because he perceives it by his senses. Ask him why he thinks an orange tree is not there, and he shall tell you, because he does not perceive it. What he perceives by sense, that he terms a real being, and says it *is* or *exists*; but that which is not perceivable, the same, he says, has no being.

Hyl. Yes, Philonous, I grant the existence of a sensible thing consists in being perceivable, but not in being actually perceived.

Phil. And what is perceivable but an idea? And can an idea exist without being actually perceived? These are points long since agreed between us.

Hyl. But be your opinion never so true, yet surely you will not deny it is shocking and contrary to the common sense of men. Ask the fellow whether yonder tree has an existence out of his mind—what answer do you think he would make?

Phil. The same that I should myself, namely, that it does exist out of his mind. But then to a Christian it cannot surely be shocking to say, the real tree existing without his mind, is truly known and comprehended by—that is *exists in*—the infinite mind of God. Probably he may not at first glance be aware of the direct and immediate proof there is of this, inasmuch as the very being of a tree, or any other sensible thing, implies a mind in which it is. But the point itself he cannot deny. The question between the materialists and me is not whether things have a real existence out of the mind of this or that person, but, whether they have an absolute existence, distinct from being perceived by God, and exterior to all minds. This, indeed, some heathens and philosophers have affirmed, but whoever entertains notions of the Deity suitable to the Holy Scriptures will be of another opinion.

Hyl. But according to your notions, what difference is there between real things and chimeras formed by the imagination, or the visions of a dream, since they are all equally in the mind?

Phil. The ideas formed by the imagination are faint and indistinct; they have besides an entire dependence on the will. But the ideas perceived by sense, that is, real things, are more vivid and clear, and, being imprinted on the mind by a spirit distinct from us, have not the like dependence on our will. There is, therefore, no danger of confounding these with the foregoing, and there is as little of confounding them with the visions of a dream, which are dim, irregular, and confused. And though they should happen to be never so lively and natural, yet by their not being connected and of a piece with the preceding and subsequent transactions of our lives, they might

easily be distinguished from realities. In short, by whatever method you distinguish *things* from *chimeras* on your scheme, the same, it is evident, will hold also upon mine. For it must be, I presume, by some perceived difference, and I am not for depriving you of any one thing that you perceive.

Hyl. But still, Philonous, you hold, there is nothing in the world but spirits and ideas. And this, you must necessarily acknowledge, sounds very oddly.

Phil. I own the word "idea," not being commonly used for "thing," sounds something out of the way. My reason for using it was because a necessary relation to the mind is understood to be implied by that term; and it is now commonly used by philosophers to denote the immediate objects of the understanding. But however oddly the proposition may sound in words, yet it includes nothing so very strange or shocking in its sense, which in effect amounts to no more than this, namely, that there are only things perceiving and things perceived; or that every unthinking being is necessarily, and from the very nature of its existence, perceived by some mind, if not by any finite created mind, yet certainly by the infinite mind of God in whom "we live, and move, and have our being."[7] Is this as strange as to say the sensible qualities are not on the objects, or that we cannot be sure of the existence of things, or know anything of their real natures, though we both see and feel them and perceive them by all our senses?

Hyl. And, in consequence of this, must we not think there are no such things as physical or corporeal causes, but that a spirit is the immediate cause of all the *phenomena* in nature? Can there be anything more extravagant than this?

Phil. Yes, it is infinitely more extravagant to say a thing which is inert operates on the mind, and which is unperceiving is the cause of our perceptions.[5] Besides, that which to you—I do not know for what reason—seems so extravagant is no more than the Holy Scriptures assert in a hundred places. In them God is represented as the sole and immediate author of all those effects which some heathens and philosophers are accustomed to ascribe to nature, matter, fate, or the like unthinking principle. This is so much the constant language of Scripture that it would be needless to confirm it by citations.

Hyl. You are not aware, Philonous, that in making God the immediate author of all the motions in nature, you make Him the author of murder,

sacrilege, adultery, and the like heinous sins.

Phil. In answer to that I observe, first, that the imputation of guilt is the same whether a person commits an action with or without an instrument. In case, therefore, you suppose God to act by the mediation of an instrument or occasion called "matter," you as truly make Him the author of sin as I, who think Him the immediate agent in all those operations vulgarly ascribed to nature. I further observe that sin or moral turpitude does not consist in the outward physical action or motion, but in the internal deviation of the will from the laws of reason and religion. This is plain, in that the killing an enemy in a battle, or putting a criminal legally to death, is not thought sinful, though the outward act be the very same with that in the case of murder. Since, therefore, sin does not consist in the physical action, making God an immediate cause of all such actions is not making Him the author of sin. Lastly, I have nowhere said that God is the only agent who produces all the motions in bodies. It is true, I have denied there are any other agents besides spirits, but this is very consistent with allowing to thinking rational beings, in the production of motions, the use of limited powers ultimately, indeed, derived from God, but immediately under the direction of their own wills, which is sufficient to entitle them to all the guilt of their actions.

Hyl. But denying matter, Philonous, or corporeal substance—there is the point. You can never persuade me that this is not repugnant to the universal sense of mankind. Were our dispute to be determined by most voices, I am confident you would give up the point without gathering the votes.

Phil. I wish both our opinions were fairly stated and submitted to the judgment of men who had plain common sense, without the prejudices of a learned education. Let me be represented as one who trusts his senses, who thinks he knows the things he sees and feels, and entertains no doubts of their existence; and you fairly set forth with all your doubts, your paradoxes, and your skepticism about you, and I shall willingly acquiesce in the determination of any indifferent person. That there is no substance in which ideas can exist besides spirit is to me evident. And that the objects immediately perceived are ideas is on all hands agreed. And that sensible qualities are objects immediately perceived no one can deny. It is therefore evident there can be no *substratum* of those qualities but spirit, in which they exist, not by way of mode or property, but as a thing perceived in that which perceives it. I deny, therefore, that there is any unthinking *substratum*

of the objects of sense, and in that acceptation that there is any material substance. But if by "material substance" is meant only sensible body, that which is seen and felt—and the unphilosophical part of the world, I dare say, mean no more—then I am more certain of matter's existence than you or any other philosopher pretend to be. If there is anything which makes the generality of mankind averse from the notions I espouse, it is a misapprehension that I deny the reality of sensible things; but as it is you who are guilty of that and not I, it follows that in truth their aversion is against your notions and not mine. I do therefore assert that I am as certain as of my own being that there are bodies or corporeal substances—meaning the things I perceive by my senses—and that, granting this, the bulk of mankind will take no thought about, nor think themselves at all concerned in the fate of, those unknown natures and philosophical quiddities[8] which some men are so fond of.

Hyl. What do you say to this? Since, according to you, men judge of the reality of things by their senses, how can a man be mistaken in thinking the moon a plain lucid surface, about a foot in diameter; or a square tower, seen at a distance, round; or an oar, with one end in the water, crooked?

Phil. He is not mistaken with regard to the ideas he actually perceives, but in the inferences he makes from his present perceptions. Thus, in the case of the oar, what he immediately perceives by sight is certainly crooked, and so far he is in the right. But if he then concludes that upon taking the oar out of the water he shall perceive the same crookedness, or that it would affect his touch as crooked things are accustomed to do, in that he is mistaken. In like manner, if he shall conclude from what he perceives in one station, that, in case he advances[6] towards the moon or tower, he should still be affected with the like ideas, he is mistaken. But his mistake lies not in what he perceives immediately and at present—it being a manifest contradiction to suppose he should err in respect of that—but in the wrong judgment he makes concerning the ideas he apprehends to be connected with those immediately perceived, or concerning the ideas that, from what he perceives at present, he imagines would be perceived in other circumstances. The case is the same with regard to the Copernican system.[9] We do not here perceive any motion of the earth; but it would be erroneous to conclude from this that, in case we were placed at as great a distance from that as we are now from the other planets, we should not then perceive its motion.

Hyl. I understand you and must necessarily own you say things plausible enough, but give me leave to put you in mind of one thing. Pray, Philonous, were you not formerly as positive that matter existed as you are now that it does not?

Phil. I was. But here lies the difference. Before, my positiveness was founded, without examination, upon prejudice; but now, after inquiry, upon evidence.

Hyl. After all, it seems our dispute is rather about words than things. We agree in the thing, but differ in the name. That we are affected with ideas from without is evident; and it is no less evident, that there must be—I will not say archetypes, but—powers without the mind, corresponding to those ideas. And as these powers cannot subsist by themselves, there is some subject of them necessarily to be admitted, which I call "matter," and you call "spirit." This is all the difference.

Phil. Pray, Hylas, is that powerful being, or subject of powers, extended?

Hyl. It does not have extension; but it has the power to raise in you the idea of extension.

Phil. It is therefore itself unextended?

Hyl. I grant it.

Phil. Is it not also active?

Hyl. Without doubt; otherwise, how could we attribute powers to it?

Phil. Now let me ask you two questions: *First*, whether it is agreeable to the usage either of philosophers or others to give the name "matter" to an unextended active being? And, *secondly*, whether it is not ridiculously absurd to misapply names contrary to the common use of language?

Hyl. Well then, let it not be called "matter," since you will have it so, but some "third nature" distinct from matter and spirit. For what reason is there why you should call it spirit? Does not the notion of spirit imply that it is thinking as well as active and unextended?

Phil. My reason is this: Because I have a mind to have some notion or meaning in what I say, but I have no notion of any action distinct from volition, neither can I conceive volition to be anywhere but in a spirit; therefore, when I speak of an active being, I am obliged to mean a spirit. Besides, what can be plainer than that a thing which has no ideas in itself cannot impart them to me; and, if it has ideas, surely it must be a spirit. To make you comprehend the point still more clearly if it is possible: I assert as well as you that, since we are affected from without, we must allow powers

to be without in a being distinct from ourselves. So far we are agreed. But then we differ as to the kind of this powerful being. I will have it to be spirit, you matter or I know not what—I may add too, you know not what—third nature. Thus I prove it to be spirit. From the effects I see produced, I conclude there are actions; and because actions, volitions; and because there are volitions, there must be a will. Again, the things I perceive must have an existence, they or their archetypes, out of my mind; but, being ideas, neither they nor their archetypes can exist otherwise than in an understanding; there is therefore an understanding. But will and understanding constitute in the strictest sense a mind or spirit. The powerful cause, therefore, of my ideas is in strict propriety of speech a *spirit*.

Hyl. And now I warrant you think you have made the point very clear, little suspecting that what you advance leads directly to a contradiction. Is it not an absurdity to imagine any imperfection in God?

Phil. Without a doubt.

Hyl. To suffer pain is an imperfection?

Phil. It is.

Hyl. Are we not sometimes affected with pain and uneasiness by some other being?

Phil. We are.

Hyl. And have you not said that being is a spirit, and is not that spirit God?

Phil. I grant it.

Hyl. But you have asserted that whatever ideas we perceive from without are in the mind which affects us. The ideas, therefore, of pain and uneasiness are in God, or, in other words, God suffers pain—that is to say, there is an imperfection in the divine nature, which you acknowledged was absurd. So you are caught in a plain contradiction.

Phil. That God knows or understands all things, and that He knows among other things what pain is, even every sort of painful sensation, and what it is for His creatures to suffer pain, I make no question. But that God, though He knows and sometimes causes painful sensations in us, can Himself suffer pain, I positively deny. We, who are limited and dependent spirits, are liable to impressions of sense, the effects of an external agent, which, being produced against our wills, are sometimes painful and uneasy. But God, whom no external being can affect, who perceives nothing by sense as we do, whose will is absolute and independent, causing all things,

and liable to be thwarted or resisted by nothing, it is evident such a being as this can suffer nothing, nor be affected with any painful sensation, or indeed any sensation at all. We are chained to a body, that is to say, our perceptions are connected with corporeal motions. By the law of our nature we are affected upon every alteration in the nervous parts of our sensible body—which sensible body, rightly considered, is nothing but a complexion of such qualities or ideas as have no existence distinct from being perceived by a mind—so that this connection of sensations with corporeal motions means no more than a correspondence in the order of nature between two sets of ideas, or things immediately perceivable. But God is a pure spirit, disengaged from all such sympathy or natural ties. No corporeal motions are attended with the sensations of pain or pleasure in His mind. To know everything knowable is certainly a perfection, but to endure, or suffer, or feel anything by sense is an imperfection. The former, I say, agrees to God, but not the latter. God knows or has ideas, but His ideas are not conveyed to Him by sense, as ours are. Your not distinguishing where there is so manifest a difference makes you fancy you see an absurdity where there is none.

Hyl. But all this while you have not considered that the quantity of matter has been demonstrated to be proportioned to the gravity of bodies.[10] And what can withstand demonstration?

Phil. Let me see how you demonstrate that point.

Hyl. I lay it down for a principle that the moments or quantities of motion in bodies are in a direct compounded reason of the velocities and quantities of matter contained in them. Hence, where the velocities are equal, it follows the moments are directly as the quantity of matter in each. But it is found by experience that all bodies—abating the small inequalities arising from the resistance of the air—descend with an equal velocity; the motion therefore of descending bodies, and consequently their gravity, which is the cause or principle of that motion, is proportional to the quantity of matter—which was to be demonstrated.

Phil. You lay it down as a self-evident principle that the quantity of motion in any body is proportional to the velocity and matter taken together; and this is made use of to prove a proposition from which the existence of matter is inferred. Pray is not this arguing in a circle?

Hyl. In the premise I only mean that the motion is proportional to the velocity, jointly with the extension and solidity.

Phil. But allowing this to be true, yet it will not then follow that gravity is proportional to matter in your philosophic sense of the word, except you take it for granted that unknown *substratum*, or whatever else you call it, is proportional to those sensible qualities, which to suppose is plainly begging the question. That there is magnitude and solidity, or resistance, perceived by sense, I readily grant, as likewise, that gravity may be proportional to those qualities I will not dispute. But that either these qualities as perceived by us, or the powers producing them, do exist in a *material substratum*—this is what I deny, and you, indeed, affirm but, notwithstanding your demonstration, have not yet proved.

Hyl. I shall insist no longer on that point. Do you think, however, you shall persuade me that the natural philosophers have been dreaming all this while? Pray what becomes of all their hypotheses and explications of the phenomena which suppose the existence of matter?

Phil. What do you mean, Hylas, by the "phenomena"?

Hyl. I mean the appearances which I perceive by my senses.

Phil. And the appearances perceived by sense, are they not ideas?

Hyl. I have told you so a hundred times.

Phil. Therefore, to explain the phenomena is to show how we come to be affected with ideas in that manner and order[7] wherein they are imprinted on our senses. Is it not?

Hyl. It is.

Phil. Now if you can prove that any philosopher has explained the production of any one idea in our minds by the help of *matter*, I shall forever acquiesce and look on all that has been said against it as nothing; but if you cannot, it is vain to urge the explication of phenomena. That a being endowed with knowledge and will should produce or exhibit ideas is easily understood. But that a being which is utterly destitute of these faculties should be able to produce ideas, or in any sort to affect an intelligence, this I can never understand. This I say, though we had some positive conception of matter, though we knew its qualities and could comprehend its existence, would yet be so far from explaining things that it is it self the most inexplicable thing in the world. And yet, for all this,[8] it will not follow that philosophers have been doing nothing;[9] for by observing and reasoning upon the connection of ideas, they discover the laws and methods of nature, which is a part of knowledge both useful and entertaining.

Hyl. After all, can it be supposed God would deceive all mankind? Do you imagine He would have induced the whole world to believe the being of matter if there was no such thing?

Phil. That every epidemic[11] opinion arising from prejudice, or passion, or thoughtlessness may be imputed to God as the author of it, I believe you will not affirm. Whatever opinion we father on[12] Him, it must be either because He has discovered it to us by supernatural revelation or because it is so evident to our natural faculties, which were framed and given us by God, that it is impossible we should withhold our assent from it. But where is the revelation? Or where is the evidence that extorts the belief of matter? No, how does it appear that matter, taken for something distinct from what we perceive by our senses, is thought to exist by all mankind, or, indeed, by any except a few philosophers who do not know what they would be at? Your question supposes these points are clear; and, when you have cleared them, I shall think myself obliged to give you another answer. In the meantime let it suffice that I tell you I do not suppose God has deceived mankind at all.

Hyl. But the novelty, Philonous, the novelty! There lies the danger. New notions should always be discountenanced; they unsettle men's minds, and nobody knows where they will end.

Phil. Why rejecting a notion that has no foundation either in sense or in reason,* or in Divine authority, should be thought to unsettle the belief of such opinions as are grounded on all or any of these, I cannot imagine. That innovations in government and religion are dangerous and ought to be discountenanced, I freely own. But is there the like reason why they should be discouraged in philosophy? Making anything known which was unknown before is an innovation in knowledge; and if all such innovations had been forbidden, men would [not][13] have made a notable progress in the arts and sciences. But it is none of my business to plead for novelties and paradoxes. That the qualities we perceive are not on the objects; that we must not believe our senses; that we know nothing of the real nature of things and can never be assured even of their existence; that real colors and sounds are nothing but certain unknown figures and motions; that motions are in themselves neither swift nor slow; that there are in bodies absolute extensions without any particular magnitude or figure; that a thing stupid, thoughtless, and inactive operates on a spirit; that the least particle of a body contains innumerable extended parts—these are the novelties, these

are the strange notions which shock the genuine uncorrupted judgment of all mankind, and, being once admitted, embarrass the mind with endless doubts and difficulties. And it is against these and the like innovations I endeavor to vindicate common sense. It is true, in doing this I may perhaps be obliged to use some ambages[14] and ways of speech not common. But if my notions are once thoroughly understood, that which is most singular[15] in them will in effect be found to amount to no more than this: that it is absolutely impossible and a plain contradiction to suppose any unthinking being should exist without being perceived by a mind. And if this notion is singular, it is a shame it should be so at this time of day and in a Christian country.

Hyl. As for the difficulties other opinions may be liable to, those are out of the question. It is your business to defend your own opinion. Can anything be plainer than that you are for changing all things into ideas? You, I say, who are not ashamed to charge me with skepticism. This is so plain, there is no denying it.

Phil. You mistake me. I am not for changing things into ideas, but rather ideas into things, since those immediate objects of perception, which, according to you, are only appearances of things, I take to be the real things themselves.

Hyl. Things! You may pretend what you please; but it is certain you leave us nothing but the empty forms of things, the outside only which strikes the senses.

Phil. What you call the empty forms and outside of things seems* to me the very things themselves. Nor are they empty or incomplete otherwise than upon your supposition that matter is an essential part of all corporeal things. We both, therefore, agree in this: that we perceive only sensible forms. But in this we differ: you will have them to be empty appearances, I real beings. In short, you do not trust your senses, I do.

Hyl. You say you believe your senses, and seem to applaud yourself that in this you agree with the vulgar. According to you, therefore, the true nature of a thing is discovered by the senses. If so, where does that disagreement from? Why is not the same figure, and other sensible qualities, perceived all manner of ways? And why should we use a microscope the better to discover the true nature of a body, if it were discoverable to the naked eye?

Phil. Strictly speaking, Hylas, we do not see the same object that we feel; neither is the same object perceived by the microscope which was by the naked eye. But in case every variation was thought sufficient to constitute a new kind or individual, the endless number of confusion of names would render language impracticable. Therefore, to avoid this as well as other inconveniences which are obvious upon a little thought, men combine together several ideas, apprehended by various senses, or by the same sense at different times or in different circumstances, but observed, however, to have some connection in nature, either with respect to coexistence or succession; all which they refer to one name and consider as one thing. Hence it follows that when I examine by my other senses a thing I have seen, it is not in order to understand better the same object which I had perceived by sight, the object of one sense not being perceived by the other senses. And when I look through a microscope, it is not that I may perceive more clearly what I perceived already with my bare eyes, the object perceived by the glass being quite different from the former. But in both cases my aim is only to know what ideas are connected together; and the more a man knows of the connection of ideas, the more he is said to know of the nature of things. What, therefore, if our ideas are variable? What if our senses are not in all circumstances affected with the same appearances? It will not then follow they are not to be trusted or that they are inconsistent either with themselves or anything else, except with your preconceived notion of—I know not what—one single, unchanged, unperceivable, real nature, marked by each name: which prejudice seems to have taken its rise from not rightly understanding the common language of men speaking of several distinct ideas as united into one thing by the mind. And, indeed, there is cause to suspect several erroneous conceits of the philosophers are owing to the same origin: while they began to build their schemes, not so much on notions as on words which were framed by the vulgar merely for convenience and dispatch in the common actions of life, without any regard to speculation.

Hyl. I think I apprehend your meaning.

Phil. It is your opinion the ideas we perceive by our senses are not real things, but images or copies of them. Our knowledge, therefore, is no further real than as our ideas are the true representations of those originals. But as these supposed originals are in themselves unknown, it is impossible to know how far our ideas resemble them, or whether they resemble them at

all. We cannot, therefore, be sure we have any real knowledge. Further, as our ideas are perpetually varied, without any change in the supposed real things, it necessarily follows they cannot all be true copies of them, or, if some are, and others are not, it is impossible to distinguish the former from the latter. And this plunges us yet deeper in uncertainty. Again, when we consider the point, we cannot conceive how any idea, or anything like an idea, should have an absolute existence out of a mind, nor consequently, according to you, how there should be any real thing in nature. The result of all this is that we are thrown into the most hopeless and abandoned *skepticism*. Now give me leave to ask you, *first*, whether your referring ideas to certain absolutely existing unperceived substances, as their originals, is not the source of all this skepticism? *Secondly*, whether you are informed, either by sense or reason, of the existence of those unknown originals? And in case you are not, whether it is not absurd to suppose them? *Thirdly*, whether, upon inquiry, you find there is any thing distinctly conceived or meant by the "absolute or external existence of unperceiving substances"? *Lastly*, whether, the premises considered, it is not the wisest way to follow nature, trust your senses, and, laying aside all anxious thought about unknown natures or substances, admit with the vulgar those for real things which are perceived by the senses?

Hyl. For the present I have no inclination to the answering part. I would much rather see how you can get over what follows. Pray, are not the objects perceived by the senses of one likewise perceivable to others* present? If there were a hundred more here, they would all see the garden, the trees, and flowers, as I see them. But they are not in the same manner affected with the ideas I frame in my imagination. Does not this make a difference between the former sort of objects and the latter?

Phil. I grant it does. Nor have I ever denied a difference between the objects of sense and those of imagination. But what would you infer from this? You cannot say that sensible objects exist unperceived because they are perceived by many.

Hyl. I own I can make nothing of that objection, but it has led me into another. Is it not your opinion that by our senses we perceive only the ideas existing in our minds?

Phil. It is.

Hyl. But the same idea which is in my mind cannot be in yours or in any other mind. Does it not, therefore, follow from your principles that no two

can see the same thing? And is not this highly absurd?

Phil. If the term "same" be taken in the vulgar acceptation,[16] it is certain —and not at all repugnant to the principles I maintain—that different persons may perceive the same thing, or the same thing or idea exist in different minds. Words are of arbitrary imposition; and since men are used to apply the word "same" where no distinction or variety is perceived, and I do not pretend to alter their perceptions, it follows that, as men have said before, *several saw the same thing*, so they may, upon like occasions, still continue to use the same phrase without any deviation either from propriety of language or the truth of things. But if the term "same" is used in the acceptation of philosophers who pretend to an abstracted notion of identity, then, according to their sundry definitions of this notion—for it is not yet agreed wherein that philosophic identity consists—it may or may not be possible for different persons to perceive the same thing. But whether philosophers shall think fit to call a thing the "same" or not, is, I conceive, of small importance. Let us suppose several men together, all endued with the same faculties, and consequently affected in like sort by their senses, and who had yet never known the use of language; they would without question agree in their perceptions. Though perhaps, when they came to the use of speech, some regarding the uniformity of what was perceived might call it the "same" thing; others, especially regarding the diversity of persons who perceived, might choose the denomination of different things. But who does not see that all the dispute is about a word—namely, whether what is perceived by different persons may yet have the term "same" applied to it? Or suppose a house whose walls or outward shell remaining unaltered, the chambers are all pulled down, and new ones built in their place, and that you should call this the "same," and I should say it was not the "same" house—would we not for all this perfectly agree in our thoughts of the house considered in itself? And would not all the difference consist in a sound? If you should say we differed in our notions, for that you superadded to your idea of the house the simple abstracted idea of identity, whereas I did not, I would tell you I know not what you mean by that "abstracted idea of identity," and should desire you to look into your own thoughts and be sure you understood yourself.——Why so silent, Hylas? Are you not yet satisfied men may dispute about identity and diversity without any real difference in their thoughts and opinions abstracted from names? Take this further reflection with you: that whether matter is allowed

to exist or not, the case is exactly the same as to the point in hand. For the materialists themselves acknowledge what we immediately perceive by our senses to be our own ideas. Your difficulty, therefore, that no two see the same thing counts equally against the materialists and me.

Hyl. But* they suppose an external archetype to which referring their several ideas they may truly be said to perceive the same thing.

Phil. And—not to mention your having discarded those archetypes—so may you suppose an external archetype on my principles; *external*, I mean, to your own mind, though, indeed, it must be supposed to exist in that mind which comprehends all things; but then this serves all the ends of identity as well as if it existed out of a mind. And I am sure you yourself will not say it is less intelligible.

Hyl. You have indeed clearly satisfied me either that there is no difficulty at bottom in this point or, if there is, that it counts equally against both opinions.

Phil. But that which counts equally against two contradictory opinions, can be a proof against neither.

Hyl. I acknowledge it. But, after all, Philonous, when I consider the substance of what you advance against skepticism, it amounts to no more than this: We are sure that we really see, hear, feel—in a word, that we are affected with sensible impressions.

Phil. And how are we concerned any further? I see this cherry, I feel it, I taste it—and I am sure *nothing* cannot be seen, or felt, or tasted—it is therefore *real*. Take away the sensations of softness, moisture, redness, tartness, and you take away the cherry. Since it is not a being distinct from sensations, † a cherry, I say, is nothing but a congeries[17] of sensible impressions, or ideas perceived by various senses, which ideas are united into one thing—or have one name given them—by the mind because they are observed to attend each other. Thus, when the palate is affected with such a particular taste, the sight is affected with a red color, the touch with roundness, softness, etc. Hence, when I see and feel and taste in sundry‡ certain manners, I am sure the cherry exists or is real, its reality being in my opinion nothing abstracted from those sensations. But if by the word "cherry" you mean an unknown nature distinct from all those sensible qualities, and by its "existence" something distinct from its being perceived, then, indeed, I own, neither you nor I, nor any one else, can be sure it exists.

Hyl. But what would you say, Philonous, if I should bring the very same reasons against the existence of sensible things in a mind which you have offered against their existing in a material *substratum*?

Phil. When I see your reasons, you shall hear what I have to say to them.

Hyl. Is the mind extended or unextended?

Phil. Unextended, without doubt.

Hyl. Do you say* the things you perceive are in your mind?

Phil. They are.

Hyl. Again, have I not heard you speak of sensible impressions?

Phil. I believe you may.

Hyl. Explain to me now, O Philonous, how it is possible there should be room for all those trees and houses to exist in your mind. Can extended things be contained in that which is unextended? Or are we to imagine impressions made on a thing void of all solidity? You cannot say objects are in your mind, as books in your study, or that things are imprinted on it as the figure of a seal upon wax. In what sense, therefore, are we to understand those expressions? Explain this to me if you can, and I shall then be able to answer all those queries you formerly put to me about my *substratum*.

Phil. Look, Hylas, when I speak of objects as existing in the mind or imprinted on the senses, I would not be understood in the gross literal sense, as when bodies are said to exist in a place or a seal to make an impression upon wax. My meaning is only that the mind comprehends or perceives them, and that it is affected from without or by some being distinct from itself. This is my explication of your difficulty; and how it can serve to make your tenet of an unperceiving material *substratum* intelligible, I would fain know.

Hyl. No, if that is all, I confess I do not see what use can be made of it. But are you not guilty of some abuse of language in this?

Phil. None at all. It is no more than common custom, which you know is the rule of language, has authorized, nothing being more usual than for philosophers to speak of the immediate objects of the understanding as things existing in the mind. Nor is there anything in this but what is conformable to the general analogy of language; most part of the mental operations being signified by words borrowed from sensible things, as is plain in the terms “comprehend,” “reflect,” “discourse,” etc., which, being applied to the mind, must not be taken in their gross original sense.

Hyl. You have, I own, satisfied me in this point. But there still remains one great difficulty, which I do not know how you will get over. And, indeed, it is of such importance that if you could solve all others without being able to find a solution for this, you must never expect to make me a proselyte to your principles.

Phil. Let me know this mighty difficulty.

Hyl. The Scripture account of the creation is what appears to me utterly irreconcilable with your notions. Moses tells us of a creation—a creation of what? of ideas? No, certainly, but of things, of real things, solid corporeal substances. Bring your principles to agree with this and I shall perhaps agree* with you.

Phil. Moses mentions the sun, moon, and stars, earth and sea, plants and animals: That all these do really exist and were in the beginning created by God, I make no question. If by "ideas" you mean fictions and fancies of the mind, then these are no ideas. If by "ideas" you mean immediate objects of the understanding, or sensible things which cannot exist unperceived, or out of a mind, then these things are ideas. But whether you do or do not call them "ideas," it matters little. The difference is only about a name. And whether that name is retained or rejected, the sense, the truth, and reality of things continues the same. In common talk, the objects of our senses are not termed "ideas" but "things." Call them so still, provided you do not attribute to them any absolute external existence, and I shall never quarrel with you for a word. The creation, therefore, I allow to have been a creation of things, of *real* things. Neither is this in the least inconsistent with my principles, as is evident from what I have now said; and would have been evident to you without this if you had not forgotten what had been so often said before. But as for solid corporeal substances, I desire you to show where Moses makes any mention of them; and if they should be mentioned by him, or any other inspired writer, it would still be incumbent on you to show those words were not taken in the vulgar acceptation for things falling under our senses, but in the philosophic acceptation for matter or an unknown quiddity with an absolute existence. When you have proved these points, then—and not until then—may you bring the authority of Moses into our dispute.

Hyl. It is in vain to dispute about a point so clear. I am content to refer it to your own conscience. Are you not satisfied there is some peculiar repugnancy between the Mosaic account of the creation and your notions?

Phil. If all possible sense which can be put on the first chapter of Genesis may be conceived as consistently with my principles as any other, then it has no peculiar repugnancy with them. But there is no sense you may not as well conceive, believing as I do. Since, besides spirits, all you conceive are ideas, and the existence of these I do not deny. Neither do you pretend they exist without the mind.

Hyl. Pray let me see any sense you can understand it in.

Phil. Why, I imagine that if I had been present at the creation, I should have seen things produced into being—that is, become perceptible in the order described by the sacred historian. I ever before believed the Mosaic account of the creation, and now find no alteration in my manner of believing it. When things are said to begin or end their existence, we do not mean this with regard to God, but His Creatures. All objects are eternally known by God, or, which is the same thing, have an eternal existence in His mind; but when things before imperceptible to creatures are, by a decree of God, made perceptible to them, then are they said to begin a relative existence with respect to created minds. Upon reading therefore the Mosaic account of the creation, I understand that the several parts of the world became gradually perceivable to finite spirits endowed with proper faculties, so that, whoever such were present, they were in truth perceived by them. This is the literal obvious sense suggested to me by the words of the Holy Scripture, in which is included no mention or no thought either of *substratum*, instrument, occasion, or absolute existence. And, upon inquiry, I do not doubt, it will be found that most plain honest men who believe the creation never think of those things any more than I. What metaphysical sense you may understand it in, you only can tell.

Hyl. But, Philonous, you do not seem to be aware that you allow created things in the beginning only a relative and consequently hypothetical being —that is to say, upon supposition there were men to perceive them, without which they have no actuality of absolute existence wherein creation might terminate. Is it not, therefore, according to you, plainly impossible the creation of any inanimate creatures should pre-cede that of man? And is not this directly contrary to the Mosaic account?

Phil. In answer to that I say, *first*, created beings might begin to exist in the mind of other created intelligences beside men. You will not, therefore, be able to prove any contradiction between Moses and my notions unless you first show there was no other order of finite created spirits in being

before man. I say further—in case we conceive the creation as we should at this time a parcel of plants or vegetables of all sorts produced by an invisible power in a desert where nobody was present—that this way of explaining or conceiving it is consistent with my principles, since they deprive you of nothing, either sensible or imaginable; that it exactly suits with the common, natural, undebauched notions of mankind; that it manifests the dependence of all things on God, and consequently has all the good effect or influence, which it is possible that important article of our faith should have in making men humble, thankful, and resigned to their Creator. I say, moreover, that, in this naked conception of things, divested of words, there will not be found any notion of what you call the "actuality of absolute existence." You may indeed raise a dust with those terms, and so lengthen our dispute to no purpose. But I entreat you calmly to look into your own thoughts and then tell me if they are not a useless and unintelligible jargon.

Hyl. I own I have no very clear notion annexed to them. But what do you say to this? Do you not make the existence of sensible things consist in their being in a mind? And were not all things eternally in the mind of God? Did they not therefore exist from all eternity, according to you? And how could that which was eternal, be created in time? Can anything be clearer or better connected than this?

Phil. And are not you too of the opinion that God knew all things from eternity?

Hyl. I am.

Phil. Consequently, they always had a being in the Divine intellect.

Hyl. This I acknowledge.

Phil. By your own confession, therefore, nothing is new, or begins to be, in respect of the mind of God. So we are agreed in that point.

Hyl. What shall we make then of the creation?

Phil. May we not understand it to have been entirely in respect of finite spirits, so that things, with regard to us, may properly be said to begin their existence, or be created, when God decreed they should become perceptible to intelligent creatures, in that order and manner which He then established and we now call the laws of nature? You may call this a "relative" or "hypothetical" existence, if you please. But so long as it supplies us with the most natural, obvious, and literal sense of the Mosaic history of the creation; so long as it answers all the religious ends of that great article—in

a word, so long as you can assign no other sense or meaning in its stead, why should we reject this? Is it to comply with a ridiculous skeptical humor of making everything nonsense and unintelligible? I am sure you cannot say it is for the glory of God. For allowing it to be a thing possible and conceivable that the corporeal world should have an absolute subsistence extrinsic to the mind of God, as well as to the minds of all created spirits, yet how could this set forth either the immensity or omniscience of the Deity or the necessary and immediate dependence of all things on Him? No, would it not rather seem to derogate from those attributes?

Hyl. Well, but as to this decree of God's for making things perceptible, what do you say, Philonous, is it not plain God did either execute that decree from all eternity or at some certain time began to will what He had not actually willed before, but only designed to will? If the former, then there could be no creation or beginning of existence in finite things. If the latter, then we must acknowledge something new to befall the Deity, which implies a sort of change; and all change argues imperfection.

Phil. Pray consider what you are doing. Is it not evident this objection concludes equally against a creation in any sense, no, against every other act of the Deity discoverable by the light of nature? None of which can we conceive otherwise than as performed in time and having a beginning. God is a being of transcendent and unlimited perfections; His nature, therefore, is incomprehensible to finite spirits. It is not, therefore, to be expected that any man, whether materialist or immaterialist, should have exactly just notions of the Deity, His attributes, and ways of operation. If then you would infer anything against me, your difficulty must not be drawn from the inadequateness of our conceptions of the Divine nature, which is unavoidable on any scheme, but from the denial of matter, of which there is not one word, directly or indirectly, in what you have now objected.

Hyl. I must acknowledge, the difficulties you are concerned to clear are such only as arise from the non-existence of matter and are peculiar to that notion. So far you are in the right. But I cannot by any means bring myself to think there is no such peculiar repugnancy between the creation and your opinion, though, indeed, where to fix it I do not distinctly know.

Phil. What would you have? Do I not acknowledge a twofold state of things, the one ectypal[18] or natural, the other archetypal and eternal? The former was created in time, the latter existed from everlasting in the mind of God. Is not this agreeable to the common notions of divines? Or is any

more than this necessary in order to conceive the creation? But you suspect some peculiar repugnancy, though you know not where it lies. To take away all possibility of scruple in the case, do but consider this one point: either you are not able to conceive the creation on any hypothesis whatsoever, and if so, there is no ground for dislike or complaint against any particular opinion on that score; or you are able to conceive it, and if so, why not on my principles, since thereby nothing conceivable is taken away? You have all along been allowed the full scope of sense, imagination, and reason. Whatever, therefore, you could before apprehend, either immediately or mediately by your senses, or by ratiocination[19] from your senses, whatever you could perceive, imagine, or understand, remains still with you. If, therefore, the notion you have of the creation by other principles is intelligible, you have it still upon mine; if it is not intelligible, I conceive it to be no notion at all, and so there is no loss of it. And, indeed, it seems to me very plain that the supposition of matter, that is, a thing perfectly unknown and inconceivable, cannot serve to make us conceive anything. And I hope it need not be proved to you, that if the existence of matter does not make the creation conceivable, the creation's being without it inconceivable can be no objection against its nonexistence.

Hyl. I confess, Philonous, you have almost satisfied me in this point of the creation.

Phil. I would fain know why you are not quite satisfied. You tell me indeed of a repugnancy between the Mosaic history and immaterialism—but you know not where it lies. Is this reasonable, Hylas? Can you expect I should solve a difficulty without knowing what it is? But to pass by all that, would not a man think you were assured there is no repugnancy between the received notions of materialists and the inspired writings?

Hyl. And so I am.

Phil. Ought the historical part of Scripture to be understood in a plain obvious sense, or in a sense which is metaphysical and out of the way?

Hyl. In the plain sense, doubtless.

Phil. When Moses speaks of herbs, earth, water, etc. as having been created by God, do you not think the sensible things commonly signified by those words are suggested to every unphilosophical reader?

Hyl. I cannot help thinking so.

Phil. And are not all ideas, or things perceived by sense, to be denied a real existence by the doctrine of the materialist?

Hyl. This I have already acknowledged.

Phil. The creation, therefore, according to them, was not the creation of things sensible, which have only a relative being, but of certain unknown natures, which have an absolute being wherein creation might terminate.

Hyl. True.

Phil. Is it not, therefore, evident the asserters of matter destroy the plain obvious sense of Moses, with which their notions are utterly inconsistent, and instead of it obtrude[20] on us I know not what, something equally unintelligible to themselves and me?

Hyl. I cannot contradict you.

Phil. Moses tells us of a creation. A creation of what? of unknown quiddities, of occasions, or *substratums*? No, certainly, but of things obvious to the senses. You must first reconcile this with your notions if you expect I should be reconciled to them.

Hyl. I see you can assault me with my own weapons.

Phil. Then as to *absolute existence*, was there ever known a more jejune[21] notion than that? Something it is, so abstracted and unintelligible, that you have frankly owned you could not conceive it, much less explain anything by it. But allowing matter to exist, and the notion of absolute existence to be clear as light, yet was this ever known to make the creation more credible? No, has it not furnished the atheists and infidels of all ages with the most plausible argument against a creation? That a corporeal substance which has an absolute existence without the minds of spirits should be produced out of nothing by the mere will of a spirit, has been looked upon as a thing so contrary to all reason, so impossible and absurd, that not only the most celebrated among the ancients, but even various modern and Christian philosophers have thought matter coeternal with the Deity. Lay these things together and then judge you whether materialism disposes men to believe the creation of things.

Hyl. I own, Philonous, I think it does not. This of the creation is the last objection I can think of; and I must necessarily own it has been sufficiently answered as well as the rest. Nothing now remains to be overcome but a sort of unaccountable backwardness that I find in myself towards your notions.

Phil. When a man is swayed, he knows not why, to one side of a question, can this, do you think, be anything else but the effect of prejudice, which never fails to attend old and rooted notions? And, indeed, in this

respect I cannot deny the belief of matter to have very much the advantage over the contrary opinion with men of a learned education.

Hyl. I confess it seems to be as you say.

Phil. As a balance, therefore, to this weight of prejudice, let us throw into the scale the great advantages that arise from the belief of immaterialism, both in regard to religion and human learning. The being of a God and incorruptibility of the soul, those great articles of religion, are they not proved with the clearest and most immediate evidence? When I say the being of a *God*, I do not mean an obscure general cause of things, of which we have no conception, but *God* in the strict and proper sense of the word. A being whose spirituality, omnipresence, providence, omniscience, infinite power and goodness are as conspicuous as the existence of sensible things, of which—notwithstanding the fallacious pretences and affected scruples of skeptics—there is no more reason to doubt than of our own being. Then, with relation to human sciences: In natural philosophy, what intricacies, what obscurities, what contradictions, has the belief of matter led men into! To say nothing of the numberless disputes about its extent, continuity, homogeneity, gravity, divisibility, etc. Do they not pretend to explain all things by bodies operating on bodies, according to the laws of motion? And yet, are they able to comprehend how one body should move another? No, admitting there was no difficulty in reconciling the notion of an inert being with a cause or in conceiving how an accident might pass from one body to another, yet, by all their strained thoughts and extravagant suppositions, have they been able to reach the mechanical production of any one animal or vegetable body? Can they account, by the laws of motion, for sounds, tastes, smells, or colors, or for the regular course of things? Have* they accounted, by physical principles, for the aptitude and contrivance even of the most inconsiderable parts of the universe? But laying aside matter and corporeal causes and admitting only the efficiency of an All-perfect Mind, are not all the effects of nature easy and intelligible? If the *phenomena* are nothing else but *ideas*, God is a *spirit*, but matter an unintelligent, unperceiving being. If they demonstrate an unlimited power in their cause, God is active and omnipotent, but matter an inert mass. If the order, regularity, and usefulness of them can never be sufficiently admired, God is infinitely wise and provident, but matter destitute of all contrivance and design. These surely are great advantages in *physics*. Not to mention that the apprehension of a distant Deity naturally disposes men to a negligence

in their *moral* actions, which they would be more cautious of in case they thought Him immediately present and acting on their minds without the interposition of matter or unthinking second causes. Then in *metaphysics*: what difficulties concerning entity in abstract, substantial forms, hylarchic principles, plastic natures, substance and accident,* principle of individuation,[22] possibility of matter's thinking,[23] origin of ideas, the manner how two independent substances so widely different as *spirit* and *matter* should mutually operate on each other[24]? What difficulties, I say, and endless disquisitions[25] concerning these and innumerable other like points do we escape by supposing only spirits and ideas? Even the *mathematics* themselves, if we take away the absolute existence of extended things, become much more clear and easy, the most shocking paradoxes and intricate speculations in those sciences depending on the infinite divisibility of finite extension, which depends on that supposition. But what need is there to insist on the particular sciences? Is not that opposition to all science whatsoever, that frenzy of the ancient and modern skeptics, built on the same foundation? Or can you produce so much as one argument against the reality of corporeal things, or in behalf of that avowed utter ignorance of their natures, which does not suppose their reality to consist in an external absolute existence? Upon this supposition, indeed, the objections from the change of colors in a pigeon's neck, or the appearances of a broken oar in the water, must be allowed to have weight. But those and the like objections vanish if we do not maintain the being of absolute external originals, but place the reality of things in ideas, fleeting, indeed, and changeable; however, not changed at random, but according to the fixed order of nature. For herein consists that constancy and truth of things which secures all the concerns of life, and distinguishes that which is *real* from the irregular visions of the fancy.

Hyl. I agree to all you have now said and must own that nothing can incline me to embrace your opinion more than the advantages I see it is attended with. I am by nature lazy, and this would be a mighty abridgment in knowledge. What doubts, what hypotheses, what labyrinths of amusement, what fields of disputation, what an ocean of false learning may be avoided by that single notion of *immaterialism*!

Phil. After all, is there anything further remaining to be done? You may remember you promised to embrace that opinion which upon examination should appear most agreeable to common sense and remote from

skepticism. This, by your own confession, is that which denies matter or the absolute existence of corporeal things. Nor is this all; the same notion has been proved several ways, viewed in different lights, pursued in its consequences, and all objections against it cleared. Can there be a greater evidence of its truth? Or is it possible it should have all the marks of a true opinion and yet be false?

Hyl. I own myself entirely satisfied for the present in all respects. But what security can I have that I shall still continue the same full assent to your opinion and that no unthought-of objection or difficulty will occur hereafter?

Phil. Pray, Hylas, do you in other cases, when a point is once evidently proved, withhold your assent on account of objections or difficulties it may be liable to? Are the difficulties that attend the doctrine of incommensurable quantities, of the angle of contact, of the asymptotes to curves, or the like, sufficient to make you hold out against mathematical demonstration?[26] Or will you disbelieve the providence of God because there may be some particular things which you do not know how to reconcile with it? If there are difficulties attending immaterialism, there are at the same time direct and evident proofs for it. But for the existence of matter there is not one proof, and far more numerous and insurmountable objections lie against it. But where are those mighty difficulties you insist on? Alas! You do not know where or what they are; something which may possibly occur hereafter. If this is a sufficient pretence for withholding your full assent, you should never yield it to any proposition, however free from exceptions, however clearly and solidly demonstrated.

Hyl. You have satisfied me, Philonous.

Phil. But to arm you against all future objections, do but consider that which bears equally hard on two contradictory opinions can be a proof against neither. Whenever, therefore, any difficulty occurs, try if you can find a solution for it on the hypothesis of the materialists. Do not be deceived by words, but sound your own thoughts. And in case you cannot conceive it easier by the help of *materialism*, it is plain it can be no objection against *immaterialism*. Had you proceeded all along by this rule, you would probably have spared yourself abundance of trouble in objecting, since of all your difficulties I challenge you to show one that is explained by matter, no, which is not more unintelligible with than without that supposition, and consequently makes rather *against* than *for* it. You should

consider, in each particular, whether the difficulty arises from the *non-existence of matter*. If it does not, you might as well argue from the infinite divisibility of extension against the Divine prescience as from such a difficulty against immaterialism. And yet, upon recollection, I believe you will find this to have been often, if not always, the case. You should likewise take heed not to argue on a *petitio principii*.[27] One is apt to say the unknown substances ought to be esteemed real things rather than the ideas in our minds; and who can tell but the unthinking external substance may concur as a cause or instrument in the production of our ideas? But is not this proceeding on a supposition that there are such external substances? And to suppose this, is it not begging the question? But above all things you should beware of imposing on yourself by that vulgar sophism which is called *ignoratio elenchi*.[28] You talked often as if you thought I maintained the non-existence of sensible things, whereas in truth no one can be more thoroughly assured of their existence than I am; and it is you who doubt—I should have said, positively deny it. Everything that is seen, felt, heard, or any way perceived by the senses is, on the principles I embrace, a real being, but not on yours. Remember, the matter you contend for is an unknown somewhat—if indeed it may be termed "somewhat"—which is quite stripped of all sensible qualities, and can neither be perceived by sense, nor apprehended by the mind. Remember, I say that it is not any object which is hard or soft, hot or cold, blue or white, round or square, etc. For all these things I affirm do exist. Though, indeed, I deny they have an existence distinct from being perceived, or that they exist out of all minds whatsoever. Think on these points; let them be attentively considered and still kept in view. Otherwise you will not comprehend the state of the question, without which your objections will always be wide of the mark, and, instead of mine, may possibly be directed—as more than once they have been—against your own notions.

Hyl. I must needs own, Philonous, nothing seems to have kept me from agreeing with you more than this same *mistaking the question*. In denying matter, at first glimpse I am tempted to imagine you deny the things we see and feel, but, upon reflection, find there is no ground for it. What do you think, therefore, of retaining the name "matter" and applying it to sensible things? This may be done without any change in your sentiments; and, believe me, it would be a means of reconciling them to some persons who may be more shocked at an innovation in words than in opinion.

Phil. With all my heart, retain the word "matter" and apply it to the objects of sense, if you please, provided you do not attribute to them any subsistence distinct from their being perceived. I shall never quarrel with you for an expression. "Matter" or "material substance" are terms introduced by philosophers, and, as used by them, imply a sort of independence, or a subsistence distinct from being perceived by a mind; but are never used by common people, or, if ever, it is to signify the immediate objects of sense. One would think, therefore, so long as the names of all particular things with the terms "sensible," "substance," "body," "stuff," and the like, are retained, the word "matter" should be never missed in common talk. And in philosophical discourses it seems the best way to leave it quite out, since there is not perhaps any one thing that has more favored and strengthened the depraved bent of the mind toward atheism than the use of that general confused term.

Hyl. Well, but, Philonous, since I am content to give up the notion of an unthinking substance exterior to the mind, I think you ought not to deny me the privilege of using the word "matter" as I please, and annexing it to a collection of sensible qualities subsisting only in the mind. I freely own there is no other substance, in a strict sense, than *spirit*. But I have been so long accustomed to the term "matter" that I do not know how to part with it. To say there is no matter in the world is still shocking to me. Whereas to say there is no matter, if by that term is meant an unthinking substance existing without the mind, but if by "matter" is meant some sensible thing whose existence consists in being perceived, then there is matter—this distinction gives it quite another turn; and men will come into your notions with small difficulty when they are proposed in that manner. For, after all, the controversy about matter in the strict acceptation of it lies altogether between you and the philosophers, whose principles, I acknowledge, are not near so natural or so agreeable to the common sense of mankind and Holy Scripture as yours. There is nothing we either desire or shun but as it makes, or is apprehended to make, some part of our happiness or misery. But what has happiness or misery, joy or grief, pleasure or pain, to do with absolute existence, or with unknown entities abstracted from all relation to us? It is evident things regard us only as they are pleasing or displeasing; and they can please or displease only so far forth as they are perceived. Further, therefore, we are not concerned; and thus far you leave things as you found them. Yet still there is something new in this doctrine. It is plain,

I do not now think with the philosophers, nor yet altogether with the vulgar. I would know how the case stands in that respect, precisely what you have added to or altered in my former notions.

Phil. I do not pretend to be a setter-up of new notions. My endeavors tend only to unite and place in a clearer light that truth which was before shared between the vulgar and the philosophers—the former being of opinion that *those things they immediately perceive are the real things*, and the latter that *the things immediately perceived are ideas which exist only in the mind*—which two notions put together do, in effect, constitute the substance of what I advance.

Hyl. I have been a long time distrusting my senses; I thought I saw things by a dim light and through false glasses. Now the glasses are removed and a new light breaks in upon my understanding. I am clearly convinced that I see things in their native forms and am no longer in pain about their unknown natures or absolute existence. This is the state I find myself in at present, though, indeed, the course that brought me to it I do not yet thoroughly comprehend. You set out upon the same principles that Academics,[29] Cartesians,[30] and the like sects usually do, and for a long time it looked as if you were advancing their philosophical skepticism; but, in the end, your conclusions are directly opposite to theirs.

Phil. You see, Hylas, the water of yonder fountain, how it is forced upwards, in a round column, to a certain height, at which it breaks and falls back into the basin from where it rose, its ascent as well as descent proceeding from the same uniform law or principle of gravitation. Just so, the same principles which at first view lead to skepticism, pursued to a certain point, bring men back to common sense.

FINIS.

Endnotes

1. Descartes wrote in the Sixth Meditation of his *Meditations on First Philosophy*: “What of the other aspects of corporeal things which are either particular (for example that the sun is of such and such a size or shape), or less clearly understood, such as light or sound or pain, and so on? Despite the high degree of doubt and uncertainty involved here, the very fact that God is not a deceiver, and the consequent impossibility of there being any falsity in my opinions which cannot

be corrected by some other faculty supplied by God, offers me a sure hope that I can attain the truth even in these matters."

2. Locke wrote in his *Essay*, "The notice we have by our senses of the existing of things without us…[is] not altogether as certain as our intuitive knowledge, or the deductions of our reason employed about the clear abstract ideas of our own minds&" (4.11.3).
3. Berkeley's account of the origin of the idea of God parallels Locke's. See (*Essay* 2.23.33).
4. *similitude*: similarity.
5. On the so-called Parity Objection, see the editor's introduction 40.
6. Hylas here proposes a bundle theory of the self. Some commentators have argued that this passage inspired Hume to develop such a theory of self. See the editor's introduction 44.
7. Acts 17:28.
8. 'Quiddity' is a Scholastic term referring to the real essence of a thing—that which makes a thing what it is.
9. The astronomical theory propounded by Nicolaus Copernicus (1473–1543), according to which the planets move in orbits around the sun and the earth rotates once daily on its own axis.
10. The law of universal gravitation, formulated by Issac Newton (1642–1727) in *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica* (*Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*, 1687), states that every particle of matter in the universe attracts every other particle of matter with a force (F) that is proportional to the product of the masses of the particles (m1 and m2) and inversely proportional to the square of the distance between the particles (D). Summarized symbolically: F = G(m1m2)/D2, where G is the gravitational constant.
11. *epidemic*: widespread or prevalent.
12. *father on*: attribute to.
13. It would seem that either a 'not' has been omitted here—it is absent in all three edi-tions—or perhaps Berkeley intended the claim to be sarcastic.
14. *ambages*: obscure ways of speaking.
15. *singular*: unusual or uncommon.
16. *vulgar acceptation*: ordinary or common meaning.
17. *congeries*: a collection of disparate items.
18. *ectypal*: pertaining to a copy or reproduction. Regarding this passage, see the editor's introduction 41 and 45.
19. *ratiocination*: the process of reasoning.
20. *obtrude*: impose.
21. *jejune*: unsatisfying to the mind; wanting in substance.
22. These six scholastic (see First Dialogue, note 14 above) concepts have their origins in the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle. 'Entity in abstract' refers to the notion of existence or being in general. A substantial form is that which makes a substance be the kind of substance that it is, and which distinguishes it from other substances. 'Hylarchic principles' refers to principles governing matter. 'Plastic natures' signifies natural forces or principles causing growth or production. A principle of individua-tion expresses the haecceity of a thing—that is, the quality that makes a thing specifically or individually what it is.
23. In his *Essay* Locke wrote, "I see no contradiction in it, that the first Eternal thinking Being, or Omnipotent Spirit, should, if he pleased, give to certain systems of created senseless matter, put together as he sees fit, some degrees of sense, perception, and thought.&" (4.3.6).
24. On the so-called mind-body problem, see the editor's introduction 47 n.5.
25. *disquisitions*: subjects for investigation.
26. Two lengths are incommensurable (or incommensurate) if their ratio cannot be expressed as a ratio of whole numbers. For example, suppose *ABCD* is a square, the side of the square *AB* is incommensurable to the diagonal of the square *AC*. An angle of contact is the angle between a curve and its tangent at any point. An asymptote is a line or curve *A* related to another curve *B*

such that as a point moves along one of the branches of *B* the distance between the point and *A* approaches zero. As Philonous's question here suggests, these concepts presented difficulties for mathematical reasoning at various points in its development. For example, in the early-5th century B.C.E., Pythagorean geometers assumed that any two lengths are commensurable. So, the discovery of incommensurables (now known as irrational numbers), led to an impasse in geometrical reasoning that persisted until later geometers, such as Theaetetus (c. 417–369 B.C.E), and Eudoxus (400–350 B.C.E.), developed a theory of proportion that could account for incommensurables.

27. *petitio principii*: a fallacy in which the conclusion is taken for granted in a premise; begging the question.
28. *ignoratio elenchi*: a fallacy which consists in purportedly refuting an opponent's position while actually disproving a position that is not asserted.
29. The Academy was founded by Plato (c. 428–347 B.C.E.) approximately in 387 B.C.E. About 273 B.C.E., under the leadership of Arcesilaus of Pitane (c. 315–240 B.C.E.), the so-called Middle Academy came to be dominated by skeptics.
30. Followers of René Descartes.

Notes

* Tell me, Hylas—So, Hylas (1713, 1725).
† not the real—not at all the real (1713, 1725).
* I know—I know; otherwise I should never have thought them, or named them (1713, 1725).
* The bracketed portion of the text appears only in the 1734 edition.
* Perceptions—Perceptions, without any regard either to consistency, or the old known axiom: *nothing can give to another that which it has not itself* (1713, 1725).
* advances—advanced (1713, 1725).
* order—series (1713, 1725).
† And yet, for all this—And, for all this, (1713, 1725).
‡ doing nothing—doing nothing neither (1713, 1725).
* in sense or in reason—in sense, in reason (1713, 1725).
* seems—seem (1713, 1725).
* to others—to all others (1713, 1725).
* But—Ay, Philonous, but (1713, 1725).
† sensations—those sensations (1713, 1725).
‡ sundry—such sundry (1713, 1725).
* Do you say—Do you not say (1713, 1725).
* perhaps agree—the sooner agree (1713, 1725).
* Have—In fine, have (1713, 1725).
* substance and accident—subjects and adjuncts (1713, 1725).

Index

"Absolute space," 5
Addison, Joseph, 4
Alciphron (1732), 5
Arcesilaus of Pitane, 146n
Archetypes, 41, 45
  See also Matter
Aristotle, 17, 145n
Assimilation Strategy, 32
Atheism, 1, 18–22, 98 and materialism, 21–22, 27
Atomic theory, 15, 29, 47n
Ayer, A.J., 46

Bayle, Pierre, 7, 9–10
  Dictionnaire historique et critique (1697), 9
Berkeley, Anne (Forster), 5
Berkeley, George
  biographical information, 4–5
  early influences, 5–10
  and philanthropy, 4–5
  and philosophy, 1
  and pragmatism, 46
Berkeley, William, 52n
Boyle, Robert, 15–16, 29
  Origin of Forms and Qualities (1666), 15
Bundle theory, 23–25, 44
  and the human soul, 26, 117, 144n

Causal-representative theory of perception, 12
Christianity, 5, 10, 27
Conflicting Appearances Strategy.
  See Relativity Strategy
Continuity Argument, 27–28, 35–36, 46

See also God; Soul
Copernicus, Nicolaus, 121, 145n
Cosmological Argument, 28–29, 36
See also God

Democritus, 13
Descartes, René, 1–2, 7–8
and materialism, 11, 15–17
Meditations on First Philosophy (1641), 8, 144n
Dualism, 11, 47n

Einstein, Albert, 31
An Essay towards a New Theory of Vision (1709), 5, 55, 86
Eudoxus, 145n
First Dialogue (synopsis), 31–35
Forster, Anne. *See* Berkeley, Anne
Fraser, A.C., 45

Geometry, 141, 145n
God, 5, 7–9
existence of, 10, 22, 27–29, 35–36, 97–98
as "Great Clockmaker," 29
and the human soul, 27
and nature of matter, 36–37, 99–100

Hobbes, Thomas, 11, 98, 110n
Hume, David, 9, 40, 43–44
An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding (1748), 43–44
A Treatise of Human Nature (1739-40), 43
Hylas, 4, 6, 11

Idealism, 3, 23, 25–27
theistic, 27–28
See also Immaterialism
Ideas, 24, 34, 41
vs. material objects, 20
Immaterialism, 2, 5–6, 10, 22–31
advantages of, 42
and illusions, 40–41
objections to, 39–42
and role of God, 29
and science, 30–31
vs. skepticism, 37–39
See also Materialism
Immorality, 1
Inseparability Strategy, 33
Instrumentalism, scientific, 30

James, William, 46
Johnson, Samuel, 25, 42, 44–45
Elementa Philosophica (1752), 45

Kant, Immanuel, 43–44
  Critique of Pure Reason (1781), 44
  Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics (1783), 44
Knox, Ronald, 28

de Laplace, Pierre Simon, 22
Leibnitz, G.W., 7
Likeness Argument, 34
"Likeness Principle," 20
Locke, John, 1–2, 7–9, 43
  Essay concerning Human Understanding (1690), 7, 11–12, 22, 144n
  and materialism, 11–12, 15–17, 24
  and science, 29–30
Logical positivism. *See* Positivism
Luce, A.A., 7

Mach, Ernst, 31
Malebranche, Nicolas, 7–9, 36–37, 43, 99, 110n
De la recherché de la vérité (1674-75), 8
Master Argument, 34, 47n
Materialism, 1–2, 11–22
  and atheism, 21–22
  criticisms of, 20–21
  defined, 15, 32
  intention, 29
  refutation of, 10
  scientific, 3, 7, 17–18, 21
  and skepticism, 18–19
  See also Immaterialism
Matter, 6, 8–10, 36–38
  and materialism, 13–14
  and pragmatism, 46
  See also Materialism
Maxwell, James Clerk, 31
Mechanical philosophy, 21
Mill, John Stuart, 45–46
Molyneaux, William, 92n
Monism, 11
de Montaigne, Michel, 9
De Motu (1721), 4

Natural philosophy. *See* Science
Newton, Isaac, 21–22, 29, 145n
Nominalism, 77, 92n
Norris, John, 45

Occasionalism, 8–9, 37

Parity Objection, 40, 116, 144n
Peirce, Charles Sanders, 46
Perception, 3, 5, 8, 12, 35
  causal-representative theory, 12
  See also Immaterialism
Phenomenalism, 45–46
Philonous, 4, 6
Physical world. See Materialism
Physics, 145
  particle, 31, 124
Plato, 6, 27, 145n–146n
Platonism. *See* Realism
Pleasure/Pain Strategy, 32
Pope, Alexander, 4
Positivism, logical, 46
Pragmatism, 46
"Pseudo-problems," 2
"Pure extension," 5
Pyrrho of Elis, 9

Qualities, 16–17, 25, 73

  primary, 13–15, 32–33
  secondary, 14–15, 32–33

Ramsay, Michael, 43
Realism, 11, 92n
  indirect/representational, 12, 19
  scientific, 29
Reality (nature of), 2, 36
  ordinary person's conception, 23
  See also Materialism
Reid, Thomas, 43
Relativity Strategy, 32–33
Resemblance relationship, 19
Ryle, Gilbert, 20

Scholasticism, 77, 92n
Science, 29–31
Scientific instrumentalism. *See* Instrumentalism
Scientific realism. *See* Realism
Scientific worldview. *See* Worldview
Second Dialogue (synopsis), 35–38
Senses, 3, 19
Skepticism, 1, 9, 18–22, 35, 38

defined, 31, 59
and materialism, 18–19
Solipsism, 42
Soul (human)
existence of, 26
immortality of, 10, 27
de Spinoza, Benedict, 7, 98, 110n
Steele, Richard, 4
Substance theory, 16, 23, 26, 33
spiritual. *See* Soul
Swift, Jonathan, 4, 25, 42, 52n

Theaetetus, 145n
Theism, 22
Index 149
The Theory of Vision (1733), 86
Third Dialogue (synopsis), 38–42
"Third nature." *See* Matter
Three Dialogues (1713), 6
editions of, 50
influence of, 45–47
intention, 29, 53–55
introduction, 52
language and meaning, 46–47
layout, 10–31
preface, 53–55
reception, 42–45
subtitle, 10, 18, 51
synopsis, 31–42
A Treatise concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge (1710), 5–6, 26, 38, 42–43, 54–55

Vanini, Giulio Cesare, 98, 110n
Verificationism, 46

Whitehall, 5
Worldview, scientific, 3, 11–18

Yale College, 5

Zeno the Eleatic, 9